BLIND

A STORY OF THESE TIMES

BY

ERNEST POOLE

The Harbor

His Family

His Second Wife

"The Dark People"

The Village, Russian Impressions

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To M. A.

BLIND

CHAPTER I.

Late on a warm cloudy night in April, 1919, upon a hill in Connecticut a few miles inland from the Sound, a large capacious spreading old house of brick and frame loomed like a great squat shadow there. Upstairs were many people asleep. Below there was not a light nor a sound—except in one room, where in the darkness the click of a typewriter was heard.

So this narrative was begun:

. . . .

1.

I am blind—but no blinder than is the mind of the world, these days. The long thin splinter of German steel which struck in behind my eyes did no more to me than the war has done to the vision of humanity. In this year of deep confusion—clutching, grabbing, spending, wasting, and in Europe plague and famine, desperation and revolt—mankind is reeling in the dark. And in these long queer crowded nights, half waking and half sleeping, it has seemed to me at times as though the bedlam of it all were pounding, seething into me. I was once a playwright—and vividly there comes to me a memory of the Broadway crowds on a big rush Saturday night. A sightless beggar stood by the curb, and in a harsh shrill piercing voice he kept repeating, "Help the blind!" The Soul of Man is like him now.

But this is against doctor's orders. The medical chap who lifted me out of my recent darkness is taking no chances of a return to that black melancholia. He still hopes that I may regain my sight. In the meantime, he has given orders, and I have agreed, that in this writing I shall leave the present and take a long trip for my health back into the distant past, and that only after working through the memories of some forty years shall I come again to this baffling age—please God, with a new pair of eyes, and a deeper vision of it all.

My doctor's name is Steve McCrea, and I have known him all my life, for we were boys together here. In the months that have just gone by, he knew how I dreaded the nights alone. From my newspaper days, I had been an owl. In the army I had learned to sleep, but again I had lost the trick of it. And knowing this, from his home nearby almost every evening Steve motored over for long talks. At first we talked about the war; but already we were beginning to see that the roar of guns had been only a part of a deeper mightier process which had ploughed up the whole world, and strange new harvests had appeared. We wondered what still lay ahead. In seeking the answer we groped in the past. Backward along the devious paths of our two lives we journeyed far; and the memories rose haphazard—the big movements and events all mingled with personal hopes and schemes, ambitions, family quarrels, small comedies and tragedies. As we talked we would often chuckle or laugh. Again there would be silent spells . . . At last I would see him to the door, listen to his motor start, and with these queer new sensitive ears I would follow it by the diminishing sound down the long winding country road. Then I would come back to this room, put out the lamp I did not need, re-light my pipe and for a time I would sit here remembering and thinking of this book of mine—while the house I once knew so well by sight grew familiar again by sound, by its tiny creaks and stirrings, the numberless whispers of its life.

It drew close like an old friend from the past, evoking the scenes and the faces.

So now, if you will, escape with me out of the glare and the din of these days far back into the years gone by.

. . . .

2.

In that world of long ago which existed before the war, on a peaceful Sabbath morning in 1875, Steve's father, who was the clergyman in our Presbyterian church, sprinkled some cold water on my innocent bald baby head, stopped while I sneezed violently, and then declared in solemn tones, "Lawrence Carrington Hart, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." So much for my age and name. My friends call me Larry Hart.

With a sister and two small cousins, I was brought up by my Aunt Amelia. From ever since I could recall, she had been the head of the family. Her husband, my father's elder brother, had been the country doctor here. My father; John Hart—or J. Carrington Hart, as he was known later in New York—had developed a small foundry in a town on the Sound five miles away. Meanwhile, he had married, and my sister Lucy and I were born in a house on the edge of the town. But our mother died when we were small, and we came to Aunt Amelia's. A few years later, our uncle died; and then Dad sold the house in town and came out to live with us. And until I went away to school, my memories are all wrapped up in this family home of ours, which was known as Seven Pines.

It is an old Connecticut house set firmly on a low green hill, with seven pines around it, a wide meadow extending down to the road. Below in the distance on sunny days gleam the blue waters of the Sound. The house is of brick painted white, with four slender white wooden columns in front and a frame wing on either side; and there are stables and a barn and various other buildings. Inside the house are many rooms and narrow halls, steps up and down. It has been here for a hundred years, sending the quiet smoke of its hearths to the sun by day and the stars by night, the heavy stones of its foundations grown to be like part of the soil of rocky New England. "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord." As a boy I used to connect that hymn with the huge gray and yellow boulders by our cellar door.

But if founded on the rocks of New England, the house, when we were children, was filled with the spirit of the West—brought in by my Aunt Amelia.

Here is a brief sketch of her life. In 1854, her family left the Mohawk Valley to join the vast migration west. They settled in Wisconsin. A little girl of nine years old, the trip by rail, canal boat, wagon, was her first immense adventure—with thrilling incidents, day and night. Wolves, Indians, flocks of pigeons that darkened the entire sky, woods full of game, rivers teeming with fish. Age of myth and endless stories—which she told to us as children. One of my "best favorites" was the story of Indian John. A tall shaggy half-witted old man, they had known him back in the East, where he was one of the last of his tribe. He would came stalking up to the farm-house, put his fingers to his mouth and say hoarsely, "Hungry! Haw!" After he had been given his supper he would lie down by the hearth for the night, and my aunt and her two little brothers would shiver at his mutterings and his big dull smouldering eyes. Then the family moved west. It was like a trip around the world. But six months later, at sunset, a tall gray familiar figure stalked up to their home, put his hand to his mouth and said, "Hungry! Haw!" He had trailed them for a thousand miles!

She told us of the slow hard growth of that lonely little Wisconsin town. Her father had a saw-mill there, and later he developed a thriving lumber business. Their neighbors were a rugged lot, native Yankees and Germans, too, who had escaped from their country after a struggle which they called "the Great Revolution of Forty-Eight"—but which to Aunt Amelia seemed but a poor and doubtful affair compared to the momentous war that began when she was still in her 'teens What vivid idealized stories she told of the call to arms, the recruiting and drilling, swift love affairs and brave goodbyes, and busy groups of women and girls working for the soldiers. Idealized, yet real in a sense, filled with convincing human details, for she had a rich sense of humor. But though she often smiled as she talked, her eyes grew bright and moist at times and her voice took on a reverent tone. For around that war, in her memory, above the tiny human folk with their many faults and weaknesses, hovered mighty figures unseen, formless spirits with such names as the Union, the Republic, Liberty, Emancipation. And when my Aunt Amelia sang "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord"—she meant it, every word of it. She was singing of her youth.

Later, on a trip to the East, she met our uncle, Daniel Hart, who had served as a surgeon in the war. They married and made this house their home. But although she came to love it here, she still looked to the West as the land of her dreams and of great openings and ideals. Many of her friends and relations had since gone still farther out to the prairies and the mountains, to farm, ranch, lumber camp and mine. And her eager fancy followed them, in the numberless letters that she wrote and in long absorbing talks with those who came to see her here. She loved to have such visitors.

She had been to Europe only once. When still a girl in her twenties, her father had taken her abroad; and she liked to tell how meeting men of various nations over there, in his hearty ringing voice he would urge each one of them to come and visit him in Wisconsin. That was the most wonderful part of this whole country, she declared. It had welcomed all the peoples of Europe; and over in never ending tides they had poured, to prove what stuff they were made of.

Aunt Amelia has always been to me the most wonderful woman I've ever known—and one of the few great Americans. In this narrative it will be hard for me not to idealize her—for she herself has always idealized her country. As I write, she is slowly dying upstairs—a staunch feeble woman of seventy-five—but the hour I spend each day by her bed is a time that I look forward to. For she is so happy about her life. Ranging through her memories, she has such a good time in them all. Again and again will her keen humor shatter some pretension or sham in someone we both knew in the past; but hardly has the smile of relish left her wide firm sensitive mouth and her blue eyes, before she will go placidly on idealizing this life she has known—not so much the people themselves as certain deep emotions in them, yearnings, hungers and ideals more or less submerged in their lives but in which she has had an astounding faith, and which she has put together into what she calls "the Soul of the West." This is her Holy of Holies, and here no humor is allowed.

She has always been to me like that. When I was a boy, she was a great mother. We little youngsters were in luck. A small woman with a resolute mouth, her hair already touched with gray was worn low down over her ears and bound with a blue ribbon. She had rather stubby busy hands which as a rule were knitting or sewing—and I remember her shelling peas. She had eyes that made a friend of a boy. She laughed little but smiled a great deal. There was something so eager and wide awake in that smile and in those eyes of hers. From the breakfast table at seven o'clock to the time when she kissed us goodnight in our beds, I could feel her watching us. In her busy active life—for she had many interests outside—she still found time to explore us all, and with us to explore the world. Oh, the long solemn talks we had, and the jokes and the conspiracies! How young she was and how very gay. I once heard her say to a tall thin woman who came in to talk over a sin that someone had committed, "I'm afraid I don't care half as much as I should about seeing people good, my dear. I want to see them happy."

Again, the richest woman of our neighborhood came in to tell of a cottage she had built near her home for worn out working girls from New York. Complacently the stout dame described what a treat it would be for the poor young things. As Aunt Amelia listened, her lips set in a vicious smile; and when the woman was gone, she declared.

"I don't see how she can face those girls when they come to her charity cottage! Right beside her own house, too! If she wants them, why not invite them *there?*"

She herself was always inviting people, many of whom for some reason or other were for the moment down on their luck.

. . . . . .

3.

With such a woman we were reared. In this old house or out on the farm, through the four seasons of the year, we little shavers—Lucy and I, with our cousins Ed and Dorothy—packed our lives with work and play, our lessons, games, discoveries, thrilling adventures, hopes and plans, dark guilty deeds. Small memories that once loomed large. I pick but a few at random:

I remember one night when I woke up in the room where I slept with my cousin Ed. The room was very dark at night, for a big tree outside the window shut out even the light of the stars. I woke up with a start. My pillow was gone! Burglars, goblins! I lay there in terror. Then shutting both eyes I reached out in the darkness. My fingers clutched a pillow, jerked it in, and I buried my face. Golly! What relief I felt. But just as I was dropping asleep the pillow was jerked away from me! At this my heart gave one big throb and felt like a lump of ice. Goblins, unmistakable goblins! I was quaking to my toes. I tried hard to scream for help, but I could not make a sound. For some moments I lay waiting there to be seized and carried out into the night. There was a chance, just a chance for me then—to grab a branch of the tree outside! The moments passed—but nothing happened. I mustered courage and reached out; once more my fingers clutched the pillow, yanked it back. And the next instant there burst forth a perfect roar of terror—from little Ed in his bed next mine. It was his pillow I had grabbed each time. Mine lay on the other side of my bed where it had dropped upon the floor. When this fact dawned upon us both, so deep and glad was our relief that we rose together as one man, sneaked downstairs to the pantry, stole some crackers and jam, and came back to feast by candlelight while we talked over the great event.

"Why didn't you yell?" he asked me in awe. I sneered at him disdainfully.

"Only little fellers yell," I replied. Ed sneezed and sneezed. What a cold he caught!

My next recollection is ugly enough. It is of a summer's afternoon when with Lucy and Dorothy we chased a gopher into its hole. Eagerly we brought pails of water; and when the wretched half-drowned little beast came out, Ed and I fiercely kicked it to death. The next moment Dorothy, who was little more than a baby then, was sobbing as though her heart would break. Lucy promptly followed suit; Ed caught the contagion and sniffled, too—while I, with a big lump in my throat, demanded resentfully of the girls,

"Well, why didn't you stop us? Why did you help us carry the pails? Yes, you did—you know you did!"

Aunt Amelia did not punish us—but after the talk she gave us that day I sneaked off alone to a certain secret tree in the wood, where I used to expiate my crimes, and I whacked my shins and thighs till they ached. As a rule, I whacked gently, but this time whenever I stopped I would recall something else she had said—and then I would whack sternly on.

I remember one good spanking I got—not because of the pain involved but because of the look on my father's face. He was trying hard to look stern but he was laughing deep inside, and this rankled in my soul. Here I was being punished for having furnished amusement to all! It was pretty darned tough. What had I done? I had simply dropped a grasshopper down Lucy's neck in church that day. But as it happened, Steve's father had paused in his sermon just then to ask:

"What is the Lord Jesus doing for you?"

And Lucy had screamed:

"He's tickling me!"

I had dug my elbow into her ribs. "Now you've done it! I'm in for it!" But to my glad astonishment there had been such laughter in that church as was never heard before. Even the bilious tenor had laughed. Suddenly it had dawned on me that I had done something pretty cute. This conviction still remained. And while my father spanked me, my young soul was filled with gloom at the injustice of the world. I had afforded those people in church the only gleam of pleasure in many dreary

Sabbath morns—and now to be spanked for it, spanked for it! And by Dad of all men! I gulped down my tears. For he was the fellow that I loved.

I saw little of him in those days. He liked fast horses; and when I was small, to my great joy he would sometimes let me drive with him in his buggy five miles to the mill town. How we flew along the road! At first I believed him when he said that such rides could only be given as prizes when I had been good. But I found this had nothing to do with the case. I could be as good as gold, but when I came to get into the buggy he would scowl over his cigar (thinking no doubt of some business snarl) and would say harshly. "Not today"—while on some other mornings when I had been distinctly bad, he would wink at me in a jovial way and say, "Come on, son." How I loved him then!

Toward evening all four of us, under my lead, would wait by the corner down the hill. I would be the farthest outpost; the rest stood at intervals up the road. At last I would hear the thud of hoofs and catch a glimpse of the buggy twinkling swiftly through the trees. I would shout to the next scout,

"There he is!"

And all of us in wild excitement, with small fat Dorothy in the rear frantically screaming, "Wait for me!" would race up the winding road for the house—while closer and closer came the thuds, and my father's ringing genial bass:

"I'll win this race—I'll win this race——"

But he always managed to lose it—just

As time wore on, he grew more remote. He spent more and more of his nights in New York; and when he came home, to my chagrin, it appeared that I was no longer his pet. To my sister Lucy, a dark slender little girl of twelve, and to Dorothy, who was only five and round as a little button, with light curly hair and vivid blue eyes, Dad gave nearly all of his jokes and attentions. Ed and I were left out in the cold, grimly wondering what he could see in "nothing but a couple of girls." But it did not weigh very hard on our souls, for we were now going to school in the village. With the village boys we ranged the fields and wooded hills, fishing, trapping, hunting with "sling shots," going in swimming, nutting, coasting. Vaguely I knew from gossip we heard that my father was growing richer fast; but although I boasted of it at times, it made little impression on my mind—except through the delightful fact that we all had handsome presents at Christmas and on birthdays; and still more through my keen interest in the rebuilding of the house. A wing was added on either side, a windmill was put up close by, and the stables and our farmer's house were considerably enlarged. I remember helping the carpenters and listening to their jokes and stories, some of which were distinctly broad. I was a hungry listener. One of them caught me at it one day, and said with a grin,

"Now he'll go and tell his father." I reddened to my very ears.

"Like hell I will," I stoutly declared. Another carpenter, my good friend, smiled approvingly and said,

"That's right, sonny, use your ears instead of your tongue, and you will learn a heap sight more than you'll ever get in school. He's a mixer—that's what Larry is."

A mixer! I hammered proudly on. I went on listening, growing, mixing. I recollect dimly a wild trip with a bibulous and fascinating old horse dealer friend of mine, on a freight train to New York. I started off like a little man and came back the next day like a scared little boy. But after Aunt Amelia's talk I did not go to my secret tree—for that grim institution had been discarded long ago.

Small memories that once loomed large, in a world which is now so far behind—a world without a telephone, a movie show or a Sunday paper, an automobile, an airplane, an ocean flight, a wireless, a war or any revolution. Small memories, an endless chain. But I shall skip the period when Lucy and I went away to school, and come to the momentous time when we learned that Dad was to marry again.

. . . .

4.

At Thanksgiving, Lucy and I came home to meet the bride-to-be. Our small plump cousin Dorothy breathlessly met us at the door. She was seven now and extremely important, and so thrilled by the event that her very curls were quivering. She had read about these stepmothers!

"Oh she is just too horrible!" Her whisper could be heard through the house. "She's perfectly lovely to look at—but she has the *cruelest eyes*——"

With this encouragement we went in; and though our future mother did not quite come up to Dorothy's picture, I promptly disliked her nevertheless. What a gorgeous creature she appeared. Age, twenty-six—of medium size. Blonde, sleekly gracious, expensive, good looking, smiling and cocksure of herself. "Every inch a born New Yorker!" was my sister's instant verdict. At Lucy's school over half the girls were Westerners who pretended to have little use for New York; and now resentment and disdain smouldered deep in Lucy's gray eyes as she faced this girl only ten years older, who had smilingly captured Dad. He looked so much younger, spick and span—"though he is well on in his forties!" I thought—his heavy figure set off by new clothes, his beard trimmed close and his hair cut shorter—utterly changed and lost to us both.

At the wedding in the Park Avenue house of her family we were a doleful pair. Our father took his bride abroad, and Lucy and I went back to school. During the Christmas vacation Aunt Amelia comforted us. She would still be our mother and this our real home. We must make the best of things and be friends with Dad's new wife. What to call her? Mother? No. We decided at last on "Aunt Fanny." So far, so good. For the present at least she was out of the way. The Christmas vacation went on as before, and then the routine life in school—and soon we had almost forgotten our trouble. But the next June when we came home, we heard another bit of news. Aunt Fanny was to have a baby.

"Confound the woman," I exclaimed, "why can't she let well enough alone?"

Aunt Amelia laughed at me, but I strode angrily up and down, while Lucy fairly snorted with wrath.

"We won't stay!" she declared. For the trouble was this. Our new mother had not yet inveigled Dad into purchasing a country house, and so they were to come here for the summer—while our aunt was to go to her old home in Wisconsin, taking Dorothy and Ed. In vain we begged her to take us, too.

"No," she decided firmly, "I always believe in facing things. You must not make a wrong start, my dears. Your father is more fond of you than you have any idea of. He has written that he wants you here, and he'll be hurt if you go away. You don't want to lose such a father as that, and you must begin by doing your best to be nice and friendly with his wife."

On leaving us Dorothy gripped my hand.

"Don't you ever let her degratiate you into calling her 'Mother'!" she enjoined.

So they departed from Seven Pines and left us to face the music alone. The music was no small affair. All day long by every train Aunt Fanny's servants and things kept arriving—a regular butler and six maids, and trunks from Paris without end—while down in the stable I stood about with my old chum the farmer, Bill Flynt, his son and Steve McCrea, and watched the English coachman install himself with his two grooms, the horses and rigs. Dad still loved good horses—there could be no doubt of that. But what fool surries, traps and dogcarts! Plainly these had been *her* choice! . . . In brief, in a swelling harmony of wealth and ease and elegance, in a few days the house was transformed from a simple old American home to the country place of a "born New Yorker." Aunt Fanny presided, good-humored and gay, filling awkward silences, admiring all Lucy's clothes and making suggestions, which Lucy rejected, but which I could see impressed my kid sister —who seemed to me to be watching intently every stitch that Aunt Fanny wore, every trick in her manners and speech.

"We're getting on," I heard my young mother say to Dad one evening.

We were, eh? We would see about that! She had a constant succession of guests and told us to ask our own friends, too—but grimly I declined with thanks. I was off to college in the fall, and meanwhile I was taking no chances of "queering myself" with my boarding school chums by bringing them to such a home. A fellow couldn't be too careful. For like them I was booked for Yale, and I had big sacred thoughts about real Yale democracy. "These infernal snobs!" I sneered.

For this democratic passion in me, two people were responsible. One was my Aunt Amelia; the other, Steve McCrea. The minister's son, he had been for years the leader of the village boys; and if I ever tried to play the snob with the ragged ones in the gang, Steve soon froze it out of me with a dry ironic smile or a devastating twinkle in his clear brown eyes. He was some years older than I, and when I went away to school he went to a medical college; but in the summers he worked for us. He slept at home and had his meals with old Bill Flynt, our farmer; but Aunt Amelia would often ask him to stay for supper up at the house. He worked for us and was one of our friends.

But this summer his position was changed. In that amazing transformation which the household underwent, Steve became "the stable boy." I heard Aunt Fanny call him that, and instantly I was furious. My democratic instincts surged up ready for a fight. But my thunderous indignation collapsed before Steve's quizzical eyes. He smiled at me and said, "Oh, my." And so "the stable boy" he became.

. . . .

5.

I come now to a night in early September. I had been riding Lord Jim that day. We had had a fall and as a result he had a nasty gash in one leg, and in the stable by lantern light Steve was carefully dressing the wound. On account of his medical work he was known in the stable as "Doc." On one side the English coachman and on the other old Bill Flynt were each giving him advice. Whatever suggestion one of them made was promptly opposed by the other, with a withering contempt. Between them sat Steve on a box, with the bruised quivering leg of the horse between his knees. Twenty-three and six feet two, sleeves rolled up, arms spattered with blood—on his lean face not a sign of attention to the advice from either side, except now and then a slow ironic smile of content as he worked calmly, carefully on. At times he would direct me to shift the lantern this way or that. I was standing close behind him—an overgrown youngster of seventeen, all arms and legs, already six feet and thin as a rail, stoop shouldered, with a quick flashing smile (so I am told) and little humorous twinkly eyes.

"Larry!"

I turned sharply. My father's strong figure was in the doorway. His voice was low, but the hard set of his wide jaws and a brusque gesture of his hand made me follow him quickly outside. There he told me. In going upstairs my young stepmother had tripped and fallen, and it seemed more than likely that her child would be born before morning. What to do? There was no telephone in those days.

"Go to town and send this wire," said Dad. It was to a New York specialist. "Then get Rainey and bring him back." Rainey was the doctor in the mill town five miles away.

"All right, Dad." I was greatly excited. I have a sensitive streak in me, and something volcanic deep in Dad rose up through his low gruff voice and went through me with a thrill. He returned to the house, and in the stable I rushed about giving orders pell mell. First I told them to saddle Dad's hunter, a big bay mare.

"Hold on, though, wait! That won't do! I've got to bring the doctor back! Put her into the buggy!" I cried.

"Who's sick, son?" I heard somebody ask. I did not answer. Too late I remembered that Dad would want no gossip down here. I scowled and lit a cigarette, plunged my hands in my pockets and strode about. My dislike of my young stepmother was gone. Vaguely I felt like a young knight-errant, though if any kind friend had told me so I would certainly have knocked him down. I leaped into the buggy.

"Stand clear, boys! Let her go!"

The next moment we were out of the barn and tearing down the starlit road.

From talks that I had later with Steve I gathered what happened while I was gone. In the stable the speculation on who was sick up at the house soon narrowed to Aunt Fanny; and knowing of her condition, the men with a slow deliberate relish began to discuss possibilities. A memory came to old Bill Flynt.

"Now comin' to think of it," he drawled, "Doc Rainey ain't to hum tonight. He's gone to New York to take a hand in the annual meetin' of the Elks."

This at once redoubled the interest and gave a new spice to the whole affair. Bill's boy was sent up to the house with the news. He returned on the run to announce that the servants were "jest a buzzin'." The Duchess (my stepmother) had fallen half down the stairs, he declared, and had been carried to her room. She was in a bad way, no doubt about that. How did the Boss take the news about Rainey? "He jest said, 'God *damn* the Elks!' " Now the gossip centered on the one absorbing question. Would the New York specialist be able to get here in time? A time-table was procured, and when that had been thoroughly discussed, the drawling nasal voices began to bring up memories of children born into the world without medical assistance. In vain did the English coachman try to squelch this ribald talk. His lofty contempt only deepened their relish. All the men were now in the barn, standing or sitting, grouped 'round the lantern, smoking, chewing, stopping to spit. Suddenly there was a silence. And when Steve, who had taken no part in the talk, looked up tensely from his work, he saw that all were watching him. In their intent and motionless eyes he caught a look of awed delight. Old Bill Flynt spoke softly:

"As soon as you're through with that horse's leg, Doc—there's another job waitin' up at the house."

Steve said nothing. He bent to his work. Slowly he wrapped the bandage tighter. What a chance! But he did not want it. Savagely he told himself he was only a kid in a medical school. What did he know? What had he done? He had delivered two women—just two—a

Dago and a Pollack. And at the thought of the gorgeous young mistress of the house, the beads of sweat came out on his temples. He heard a low chuckle and the remark,

"And she calls Doc 'the stable boy'."

The discussion went on for a few moments longer, and then abruptly it stopped again, as my father quickly entered the barn. He spoke to Steve, who put on his coat and went with Dad up to the house. There were few better gamblers than was my father in his day; and having once decided on Steve, he lost no time in showing, by brief questions and remarks, how he relied upon him now. Steve's confidence began to come back. A list of essentials was made out and sent to the village drug store. At last my father went upstairs, leaving Steve in the library.

And then he noticed Lucy there—a girl of sixteen, dark and slender, undeveloped and still rather plain—but she had strikingly beautiful eyes. As she sat with a book at the end of the room, every few minutes he could feel her shoot a quick glance up at him. Unobserved she had listened eagerly to the talk between the two men. It was she who had suggested to Dad that we had a doctor on the place; but later she confessed to me that she had her misgivings now. The odor of the stable had come with Steve into the room, and she simply could not see him upstairs. Still, for that matter, she could picture nothing of what would happen up there. Nor did she try. She had been bred not to think about that. And it was just this breeding which appealed to Steve that night. For he, too, had had his bringing up—by a Puritanical father—and he told me what a clean fresh relief it was to him that evening, coming from the coarse talk in the stable, to feel the way Lucy was taking it. Her big gray eyes showed her sense of the drama but no realization of its details. Her silent deep excitement gave him a new glow of strength. A subtle current passed between them, vibrant with youth and eager life, hunger for experience.

The man who had gone to the village returned, and he brought a change of clothes for Steve. Dad came downstairs, and at sight of his heavy anxious face Lucy jumped up and went to him. He smiled and patted her shoulder and told her she'd better go to bed. Then he took Steve to an upper room to wash and change his clothing. Later, as they were going together to Aunt Fanny's room, my father stopped in the hall and said,

"I know you're going to handle this right. My wife is not so sure of you—but you will make her feel so from the moment you enter the room. Understand? She's a woman—you're a man. And you know your business. Now come in."

A moment later Steve faced two women, a capable looking English maid and Aunt Fanny, who was standing with her small hands gripping the back of a chair. Her bright tortured angry eyes searched his and found the steadiness that Dad had put there for the crisis.

In the meantime I had returned from town. Lucy had not gone to bed, and for what seemed hours we waited here, in this room where I am writing now. Lucy and I had been close chums. In a low strained voice she asked me certain questions. The things I had heard from boys and men had not included this part of it—but I answered what I could. Then there fell long silences. I got up and moved restlessly about. Lucy sat motionless by the lamp. . . . Death! What a smashing blow to poor Dad! . . . No, Steve could take care of this. . . . "The stable boy." . . . I smiled at that —then cursed myself for smiling. "What a damned hard thing for a woman it is. What a queer mysterious thing life is." . . . Lucy drew a quivering breath. I glanced at her. Like a flash came the thought: "She'll go through a night like this herself!" And a lump rose sharply in my throat. She looked so slender, a mere kid. Then she looked up and smiled at me, and the lamp showed her face was wet with tears.

It was dawn when we heard the child's first cry; and the light was still dim in the room when Steve's tall awkward powerful form loomed in the open doorway.

"It's all right now," he said. "A girl."

We had both come close to him, and I noticed again Lucy's big eager eyes.

"Oh, wonderful!" she whispered. A slight answering gleam passed over his face. With a little smile he turned to me:

"Your father wants coffee and so do I. Will you see to it? Have it sent upstairs."

He squared his shoulders as though they ached, and went back to his patient. Lucy sat down and began to cry, smiling blissfully all the while.

About two hours later, the New York specialist arrived; and he lost no time in revealing to us just how petty and how mean a big specialist could be. When he heard the good news, he was plainly peeved. He roused Aunt Fanny out of a sound sleep to examine her—and with an expression of grave concern he prescribed a course of treatment to repair the "serious damage" done. He talked to Dad and the nurse he had brought. Steve he ignored completely. I remember the hard smile of disillusionment and disgust that came over the face of my chum. He went home to the village to get some sleep, and I found him there in the afternoon in the yard behind his father's house. He was lying on his back in the grass staring grimly at the clusters of crab-apples over his head. He spoke little, but the few things he said showed me a side of him I had not known. With Steve I had learned to fish and swim, hunt, use an axe or hammer or saw, cook in the open, sleep out at night, ride a horse, be friends with a horse. I had known him as honest, shrewd and kind, plucky, cool and practical, with a dry humor living his life. But by what he said that afternoon, I was given vaguely to feel something deeper in him, which I did not clearly understand.

Living alone with his father, day by day and year by year he had seen the Christianity which his parent preached in church come up against life in the village and, as he put it—"kind of bounce back." Life had seemed the more real of the two; and because Steve liked real things he had stuck to life and dropped religion. This had opened a gap between father and son. Later his medical studies had cleared up many things in his mind. Here the facts of life were explored and shown up in a cold clear light. And because for all his keen practical thinking, Steve was an idealist with much of the old Puritan left deep down inside of him, he had made a new religion—of Science. In his first years at the medical school, working on a schedule of from five o'clock in the morning till eleven or twelve at night, he had felt himself become a part of this hard clear world of realities. Already he had dreams of New York and a hospital appointment. He looked to the big men there as gods. . . . And now one of these gods had been petty and mean! In the new religion, as in the old, again the disillusionment.

Grimly he lay there in the grass and gave me rough intimations of this in brief and blunt disjointed remarks. Then my father came into sight around the corner of the house.

"Hello, boys." He came over and stood looking down at Steve. "Don't get up—you've earned a rest." There was a quizzical look on Dad's face. "You're learning things, eh? All big men have queer little streaks, and show 'em at times. As to last night—well, I don't claim to be a doctor, but I have a kind of a feeling that a woman's life was saved by a clean splendid piece of work. Here's your first fee, son—may there be many more. And remember, if ever you need a boost, that I'm a fellow you once helped. I don't want to forget it—and never will. In the meantime, you had better drop your job and take a rest before you go back to college."

At this I shot a quick look up at Dad. For as clearly as though he had told me I knew that this was my young stepmother's idea. "The stable boy" must disappear.

"Coming, Larry?"

"No. Not yet."

I wanted to stay and see that check. It was for a thousand dollars. Steve's dream of a career in New York drew suddenly so close and real that for a few moments he did not speak. Silently our youngster minds went back together over the night, and the curious compounding of reality and sham, of mystery, of agony and of grim irony in it all.

"Life sure is queer," said Steve at last.

"You bet it is," I answered.

CHAPTER II

1.

IT was not until three years later that Steve and I came together again.

I had a great time at college—a wonderful time, all by itself. I did little work; I was neither a student nor was I one of those intense and important chaps who rush about from morning till night engaged in the business of college athletics, the *Yale News,* the glee club and class politics—but I lived in them all. I gave sage advice; I listened and talked; I smoked and gossiped half the night. I fairly basked in the joy of those years—"gliding smoothly swiftly by." Why then did I break away at the beginning of senior year?

Mainly because of my father. I could feel that Dad was planning to have me go to work in his mills, and I meant to get ahead of him, and go on a paper in New York. I felt that I had it in me to write. In college I read hungrily, hit or miss, all kinds of short stories, novels and plays. But to sit down like an earnest young soul and wrestle with the art of writing did not appeal to me in the least. All well enough for a girl or a poet. For me a real man-sized job on a paper. To jump in and be *made* to write, to feel myself part of a big machine, learn at first hand the life of the town, grow wise as a serpent, swift as a hawk, dash off copy, swoop about! This glamorous picture was filled in by the many trips I made to New York.

On these train rides to the city, slouching comfortably down into a seat of the "smoker," I would stare out of the window, smiling expectantly to myself over the night that was waiting ahead. A gloomy rainy afternoon would only increase my anticipation. As my train rushed smoothly on, over the sodden darkening landscape I would watch impatiently for the glow of the city lights. . . . Not that there was anything very wild about my adventures there. My father gave me plenty of money, and vaguely I felt that he rather believed in sowing the wild oats while you are young. But although I saw wild oats enough—oats as wild as oats could be—I sowed about me little or nothing but the keen shrewd smiling looks of a youngster very rapidly and self-consciously growing "wise to the town." I was a good fellow and stuck with the gang; in many awful places I breathed delightedly, "God, this is life!"—and then went home and slept like a top. For I was a chap with the habit of almost always putting things off—even dissipations—and my glad existence was like one long train ride to me, bright with whirling glimpses of the life I was to lead.

That this would be unhampered by any lack of ready cash was now a pleasing certainty. The solid old Park Avenue house where my father lived with his gorgeous young wife, left no doubt in my mind as to that. Money, position, dinners, dances, week-end parties and the like—these were plainly in the picture. All very nice and cozy. But I would not be a snob, nor would I be inveigled by some sweet confiding girl into marriage before my time. No sir, I proposed to get this whole great thriller of a town into the picture before I was through. A mixer and a democrat. A rebel against—I didn't know what—but a rebel all right!

Back at college, in one of my rebel moods, I created a terrible scandal one night. There were several secret societies there, the pillars of our college life. So sacred were their meetings, which came every Wednesday night, that after leaving the secret halls the members were bound by fearful oaths to utter no word again that evening either to each other or to any humbler mortal. Solemnly in derby hats they paraded, those great brotherhoods, from their halls to the dormitories where they bade each other a silent goodnight. So much for the gods. Now for the fiend. From a blacksmith I procured an enormous chain and padlock, and with this one Wednesday night I chained and locked the iron gates at the entrance to the court of our largest dormitory. The rumor spread. Heads came out of windows; eyes looked expectantly up the street. And here came the first batch of Olympians, arm in arm, in their derby hats. They came to the gate and silently stopped. How to get to their rooms? In pantomime they tried to consult, and one of them went for the janitor. Another brotherhood hove in sight—and another and another; and as they all stood waiting there, chuckles were heard from the windows above, and a drunken senior leaning out kept asking the most sympathetic questions as to their awful plight. Majestic silence. The janitor came. More gestures. Off he went for an axe. More chuckles, and advice from the senior. College tradition crumbling fast. When the janitor returned, my padlock proved too stout for his axe; and now the chuckles waxed and swelled into ribald peals of mirth. One by one the outraged gods climbed in through lower windows and sneaked quickly to their rooms. Busted was their holiness! Social positions gone to pot! With several boon companions I feasted joyously that night.

And as I was a rebel in college, so I was one in New York. When my affable young stepmother offered to entertain for me, I declined. I had not come to town for mere conventional affairs. When Lucy was home from boarding school I would take her to the theatre, and then to some remote cafe for a forbidden Bohemian feast that made my sister's eyes grow round. There was no end to the devil in me. I took her one night behind the scenes at a musical show where I had a friend, an enormous man at whose rubicund visage the whole city rocked with mirth. I had other friends, an astonishing lot, but I can barely recall them now. A stout old actress lady and a slim young one from Detroit, a scene shifter at Weber and Fields who was a Christian Scientist, and a police reporter—"Pop Jehosophat" he was called—a dark featured, stout, good-natured Jew. I met him in the nick of time when I sorely needed aid for a friend who had unharnessed a horse from a cab and was trying very earnestly to ride the beast into a cafe. I had Pop down to college several times in the following year, and hungrily learned about life on a paper. Yes, a newspaper job for me!

But I loved college life and I drifted on, and I'm not at all sure that I would not have drifted on into my father's mills, if it had not been for an uncanny scare that I got one October night. It had nothing to do with my plan, and yet it gave me the jerk and the shock that I still needed to pry me loose.

To the theatre in our college town there came one Saturday evening a hypnotist, whose performance interested me so keenly that with a few companions I took him later to my rooms, where he used his psychic power on two or three of our number. When he left he turned to me and said,

"My young friend, I am convinced that all I do you can do yourself. You have rare powers in my line."

This was a fascinating thought. And on the following evening, with four or five fellows in my room, I selected a slender delicate chap and fixing him with a ferocious stare I launched into the world of magic. At first I had little or no success, but after a few minutes I saw his eyes grow fixed and queer, his body rigid as a post. What next? I grew uneasy. In a voice a bit unsteady I told him to wake up, I was through. But not a glimmer in those eyes. They were glassy as death. What had I done? To what mysterious region had I consigned this chap I loved? I looked at my friends. They were silent, uneasy, all remote. This was my job —all up to me! And what knowledge had I to guide me here? For all I knew he might stay in this state for days —might even die of it! To call in a doctor might easily mean my expulsion from college. Besides, I thought excitedly, a doctor could do nothing now. I had got him into this and I alone could get him out! Suddenly I felt the sweat trickling down my temples. I, who was a mixer, had mixed this fellow's will and mine and made a beastly mess of it. I owned him—owned him —body and soul! I felt weak, exhausted, faint. "Cold feet! Come on now, be a man!" I glared at him and gripped his hands and kept repeating, "Come out of this, Danny—come out of this now!" At last with a rush of relief I saw the eyes in front of me change and glimmer, grow alive. A few moments more and he was out, while I sank limply into a chair.

"Never again," I vowed that night, "will I monkey with this kind of thing."

A weird little incident, you may say, but hardly enough to change a man's life. I reply that I was not a man but a half-baked youngster drifting along; and that until you yourself have had the uncanny sense of absolute power and loneliness I experienced then, you can be no judge of its effect. That night I took a long, long walk, and my thoughts had grown amazingly clear. What did I really want in life? To go on a paper, only that. And much as Dad might want me to go to work in his tiresome mills, his wish was not half so intense as mine. He had his own life to absorb him. This was my life, mine alone. Back with a rush came the memory of how desperately alone I had felt in the incident of a few hours before. Those other chaps in the room—how remote—they might have been millions of miles away. Each one of us riding his planet through space. All right then, no more drifting! Ride!

The following week-end I went home to Aunt Amelia to get her advice. From the start she had warmly approved of my plan to become a writer. "Oh, Larry, dear," she had told me, "that's what I have wanted to do all my life!" With her help now I got Dad's consent. I went back to New Haven and spent a few days, during which more than once I was sorely tempted to let things slide and go on as before. But I had already committed myself. My friend Pop had found me a job. And a week later, in New York, I went on his paper as a cub.

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2.

Then for long weeks I failed and failed, and I was filled with a grim dismay. My wise knowledge of the city melted as I rushed about. What a boundless labyrinth of a town. What scurrying millions of men and women, half of them barely speaking English. What dull faces greeted me, what suspicious, cautious eyes. How to get the facts when out on a story? How to untangle the truth from the lies? How to write it—how to write? . . . I sat at a long narrow table, the edge of it notched and whittled deep. Around me was the click and hum of machines, and doors kept slamming, and men bustled in and out. Piles of paper lay knee deep, and at times a boy would push it down through an enormous hole in the floor. This floor shook and rumbled. Desperately I tried to write. But when I handed in my story at the city editor's desk, that terrible man with his hard brown eyes would either pencil it up with a sneer—or worse, he would shout savagely to some other member of the staff,

"Here, Billy, *write* this—for Christ's sake!"

Deep and utter gloom for me. Weddings, funerals and the like soon became my daily lot, until I loathed the very thought of marrying or dying. At intervals I would get a chance at a suicide or a burglary. Eagerly I would let myself out. Blandly he would cut me down—to a "stick" or a tiny paragraph—and look at me hopelessly. My rebel instinct saved me then. Was he always right, I always wrong? No, by God, and I would show him! Feverishly I hunted the town. To wring out of its coldness warm living stuff and get it past that editor's desk, I worked at all hours, grew thin as a rail. And then, when I was almost done, the gods were suddenly kind to me.

On the street one afternoon I met my old friend, Steve McCrea. While in college I had occasionally looked him up in his hospital here, but in these last desperate weeks I had found no time for friends. As we stood together now, in response to his questions about my work, I tried to put a good face on it. But watching me in his shrewd quiet way, Steve laid his hand on my shoulder.

"The place for you, my son, is in bed."

I protested. Though I had been feeling infernally sick for the last few days, I was crossly determined not to give in.

"You'll have to, though." He felt my pulse. "If you won't go home, come along with me."

Despite my further protests he took me to his hospital and put me to bed in a private room. That evening in a quiet talk he got the full truth out of me. Then he said,

"All right, you're making good." To my look of surprise he answered, "You've found that any job worth while is like a cat's claws at the start. You've stood the scratching and come through. I'll bet you're through the worst of it. Forget it now and take a rest."

These words from Steve were like a drink of cool clear water to me then, and he followed it up by telling me about his own experience. At the start he, too, had found it hard. In the hospital the pace was terrific—everyone was overworked; and finding Steve, the tall young giant, only too ready to lend a hand, some of the other internes began to load their work on him. He slept in snatches. Over his cot was a loud bell that roused him by its call for help at any hour, day or night. In that small world with its acrid smells, its silent and unending struggle with the claws of death, he led a weird absorbing life. In a whirl they passed, those first swift weeks; and then like a smashing blow in the face one night came the realization that he had blundered with his knife. A man lay dead, through his mistake. The nurse said nothing. Did she know? He went back to his bed and lay in the dark. "I nearly quit my job that night." But he pulled himself together. And now as he watched he realized that he was not alone in his blunder. In the gossip of the place he heard of other mistakes in plenty. Young internes—flippant, overworked. Free patients always pouring in, many so hysterical that you had to hold 'em down. Some couldn't speak English. How to get answers, things that you must learn like a flash? Guess and let it go at that. Couldn't always be careful, day and night, sleep or no sleep. Why didn't the city pay more for the job? In those days, as orderlies they were still using convicts from Blackwell's Island—often drunk. Bedlam would break loose in the wards. What a hospital—what a town! What a science—struggling on in the dark!

Steve was "riding the ambulance" now. On breathless August evenings, on freezing January nights, the ambulance answered calls for help from the Tenderloin, from the theatre crush, from big hotels, dark tenements, or from the ships along the docks. And back it came with inanimate forms in which was locked the stuff of life—its comedies, its tragedies, crimes and vices, schemes and dreams, devotions and delusions—now silent and now jibbering. Often the driver beat up his horse, for it was a disgrace in the hospital world not to bring in your man alive. If he died on the way you were met with jeers.

A hard cynical streak developed in Steve as he grew wise to the great town. The old feeling of disillusionment? Yes. But the worst of it was over. For each life he lost, he saved a score. He had exceptional hands for the knife, and attracted the notice of his chiefs. As the months went on he began to see that, despite the blunders and mistakes, there was hard clean work for the most part here; and at times a miracle was performed that made a man bow down to his science and dream dreams of all it could do. Death had scratched her bloodiest. Steve could feel himself getting on.

He did not tell me all this at the time, but in bits he gave me enough of it to accomplish his purpose—to make me feel that my own little struggle was nothing to be so intense and solemn about, that I was but one of the thousands from all over the U. S. A. and even from across the sea who every day and every night poured into the city to fight for a place. Fuel for the furnace—but we were young. And I was through the worst of it. Though I had no proof whatever of this, I had a certainty that it was so. Something tight in my head relaxed, and in my quick reaction I became a convalescent so genial that to my bedside came internes, nurses, orderlies. For here is a secret of hospital life. A laugh is quickly multiplied. To any room where a laugh is heard come people from all over the building. So a hospital keeps itself sane.

My brief illness at an end, although back at work on the paper, I put in every spare hour here; for it seemed to me that I had turned up the rich new vein of human stuff for which I had been searching—glimpses from this angle back deep into the life of the town, into the stories that lay behind the fights and the murders, the feuds of gangs and the wild sprees of roisterers come to this city from ranch and plain; the lonely suicides in hotels or down along the river front, the rescues, the heroics of life savers of all kinds. I made my sketches brief and rough, but in them was the glamor with which I was looking on life in those days. My editor was not enthused.

"Death has been done to death," he remarked.

But I was not to be discouraged. Old or new, this was fresh to me. In a month or so, on an inside page he gave me a column—"Behind the Knife." And by degrees he assigned to me those bigger stories—actual news—celebrities of diverse kinds, men and women, rich and poor, who for countless human reasons killed or stabbed or poisoned or tossed lightly out of windows their own bodies or those of their friends. The hospitable hospital gathered them in and patched them up for appearance in court, while big policemen sat by their beds, and through my pen the ravenous town was fed the stories of their lives. Doctors and nurses helped me with what they called my "headline patients." In return I had nothing but praise for their work. And as for Steve, I dragged into my yarns the name of "that brilliant young surgeon, McCrea," until the hospital authorities learned of it and called a halt. Sternly Steve forbade me to give him more publicity.

"All right," I agreed with a cheerful grin. "But why are all good doctors snobs? Here I hang your doctor's sign where it can be seen all over the town; and all I get for it is a 'Stop'—when the thing you ought to do at once is to run a daily 'ad' in our sheet to take full advantage of what I have done."

He gave me then the calm disdain of a surgeon and a scientist, but I smiled back with the hardened eyes of a cynical old reporter. For I was a real journalist now. When college chums came down to town, I took them about and sagely talked and made them feel how I had grown. A deeper wider mixer, aged twenty-one, tall, stoop shouldered, homely, lank, with a ridiculous little moustache and a voice even deeper than before—entranced with my freedom I ranged the town and burned the candle at both ends. I was an omniverous reader. Kipling was my favorite, but I read a lot of trash as well. Reaching home about one in the morning and reading in bed when I knew very well that I should have been sleeping, I would scowl at the admonishing hands of my precise old fool of a clock, and lighting my pipe again read on. Breakfast in bed at eleven and down to my paper about noon. So the crowded winter passed, and by spring I was nearly ready again for a bed in Steve's hospital.

Moreover, Dad was worried about me. More than I had realized, he was following my work. He had told himself that he hoped I would fail, but unconsciously he had backed me to win, and when I first began to make good, his relief and satisfaction were almost as great as mine. In a casual way I would point out a story of mine in the paper. Casually he would glance it through and make some jocose remark. But his pride was plain to see. Later, however, as he saw my little successes go to my head, he grew worried over the life I was leading. He sized me up as the sort of lad who might very easily, some fine day, wake up and find himself married to one of those young Broadway birds who swoop at the sons of millionaires. I was the son of J. Carrington Hart, and a very cocky son at that, gaily accepting every smile as a tribute to my own *beaux yeux* instead of my father's bank account. Moreover, at best, my drinking and smoking and talking and writing were wearing this lank body of mine down to nothing but skin and bone.

And having heard me speak often of Steve, my father turned to him for help. They had a talk about my case. Aunt Amelia was in it, too; and if Dad still had an idea of my taking a job in his mills, that hope was promptly killed by my aunt.

"He wouldn't consider it," she declared, "and I don't see why on earth he should. He has made a fine start and he ought to go on. All he needs is someone to steady him."

She suggested to Steve that when he left the hospital in June, he and I should try living together awhile. Steve agreed, and went on to tell of an offer he had had from his chief. John Bannard, the big surgeon, was a pioneer in the health crusades through which, back in the Nineties, medical men were just beginning to tackle this great yowling cat of a town. He had proposed that under his guidance Steve should spend the following year down in a crowded tenement block, and make a careful survey of the ravages of T. B.—which is short for Tuberculosis. Steve had agreed, and he felt now that the idea of living with him there would appeal to my hungry writer's soul, and that a look into that grim world might tone down my exuberance. My father was against it at first, for "the slums" were connected with strikes in his mind; but Aunt Amelia stoutly declared that a good hard honest look at the poor could do no harm to anyone. A writer should learn the whole truth about life. Then she brought Dickens into the talk, and when she saw that this idea was making quite an appeal to Dad she followed it up by dwelling upon Steve's steadying influence. In the end my father gave in, and my aunt went home to Seven Pines with visions of "Oliver Twist" in her head. May the gods reward her for that day. For although I never became a novelist, as she had dreamed, the year that I spent in that tenement block did more to fill in the picture for me than anything else in my whole life—the picture of humanity groping, struggling, surging on to war and revolution.

One night not long after that, Steve had me to dinner with his chief; and to us youngsters Bannard talked of the changes he saw coming. He spoke of the rush to our cities and towns of people from all over the earth, of the unbelievable crowding here and the sharp restlessness, discontent, the growth of wealth, the swiftly awakening bitterness among the poor. To head it off, each had his part. On us both he urged that while we were still young and free we go down to the tenements and find out for ourselves what was there.

"You won't find it very gloomy," he smiled. "You'll find it full of all the queerest sparks of human nature. Take it in and keep your heads. You'll meet a lot of wild ideas. Duck them. Try and stick to facts. For the facts have in 'em the power that will shake the world one of these days."

Gripped by curiosity, I was more than ready to agree. And Steve and I began to plan for the next big chapter in our lives.

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3.

That summer I got a month's leave from my paper and came to Seven Pines for a rest. In the meantime Steve had finished his course and came back to the village for his first vacation in years. Aunt Amelia welcomed him to the house, and eagerly she entered into our plans for the coming year. After the months I had just spent in the dizzy fascinating town, it was good to be back in this rambling house of brick and frame that I knew so well. Though vaguely aware that its traditions and the things it stood for were now rapidly passing away, still the stout planks I felt under my feet gave me a sense that despite all change and innovation the essential spirit dwelling here was not dead but living in the land. Exactly what that spirit was, I could not have put into words. Democracy in work and play—let everyone prove the stuff that was in him. Religion but no rigid dogma. Tolerance, openmindedness, zest and hunger for new things but a deep sentiment for the old. Generous thoughts and feelings. A canny shrewdness, a ready laugh. Of such elements the spirit of this house and this woman had been made. No average woman. She was one of those whose names are scarcely ever seen in print but whose influence is felt by hundreds. Every one of us has known a few of these great Americans. Aunt Amelia was one of mine.

We talked to her by the hour now—or rather, Steve sat listening and throwing in a word at times, while I did the talking for us both. With what fresh vital interest she fed the expectancy in each of us as we looked ahead up the opening vistas of our lives. What a listener, what a friend for all young people and their plans! . . . And yet my aunt was growing old. In speaking of the crowded slums she gave us her cure for the troubles there. Clean out the cities, send such people out to the prairies and the farms to build free splendid lives for themselves and for their children. But while she spoke, with a twinge of regret as at something gone out of my life, I felt that the West of her distant youth was already for the most part filled, that the cities and towns so rapidly growing marked a new stage in our national life, and that my aunt's religion was quickly being left behind.

Even here, this summer would see perhaps the last reunion of those she had reared. Soon Dorothy, who was twelve years old, would be the only one left of us all—Aunt Amelia's children. Did she feel it, too? She gave no sign; but from Dorothy I learned how her mother and she had excitedly made ready for our coming. If this were to be the last long gathering, she was resolved it should be a success.

We were the first comers, Steve and I. For a week we had the stage to ourselves, and then my cousin Ed arrived. Twenty years old, a stolid good-humored bull of a youngster, looking as though he belonged out of doors—already he had finished his course at the agricultural college in the quiet town in Wisconsin where his mother had lived as a girl. In a few months more he would make his start on a ranch belonging to one of his uncles. As he spoke of this and she watched him, I thought I saw in his mother's face a twinge of realization and wistful regret. "Young man—go west." He was one of the last in that mighty migration of which her own youth had been a part. A new era of crowded cities was here, with new standards, dreams, ideals—or rather, no strong new ideals—old anchors loosed and everything changing, all in a stage of transition now.

My sister Lucy was like that. In her nothing was settled, nothing sure. Restless, temperamental, gay, demanding and receiving attention everywhere she went—when she arrived at Seven Pines she at once took the center of the stage. Lucy was now twenty years old—dark, slender, undeveloped still, with big eyes and mobile features, subtle transformations that were always puzzling me. Now for the smallest reason she would be ready to flash out and we would fight like cats and dogs; again she was all sisterly love and we would have long quiet talks. She lived most of the winter in New York; and loving Dad, she was jealous and unjust to his wife; but in vain she tried to make her the stepmother of the story books. Aunt Fanny was so decent to Lucy, getting her clothes and "bringing her out," giving dinners and dances for her friends—that in spite of her hostility, Lucy modelled after her in a way that made me smile. Sagaciously I told myself that now I had my sister placed. But after going about like mad to dinners and dances for two years, she began to get sick of it, restless again. She loved to come out to Seven Pines, and here I found a different girl, modelled on Aunt Amelia lines. She would have serious talks with our aunt, and she would take long rides with me. Young Dorothy adored her, and Lucy loved to be adored. She was sensitive to what people thought—I mean if she really cared for them. And here with her aunt and her cousin, their adoration and belief brought out the best things in her.

Now again she came under the spell of the house, and her coming brought an instant change. She was the one we had waited for to start this last reunion, this last gathering while we were young. Each of us felt that very soon he would be almost hopelessly old. We must make the most of life while it lasted! And make the most of it we did. Deep tides and streams of gaiety—now joyous, swift, now deliciously slow—were felt all over this happy old house. There was indoor baseball out in front, under the wide spreading elms, and tennis foursomes, tournaments, swims in the river, rides and drives to the county fair and to dances in the houses upon the surrounding hills. Various friends of ours arrived. The house was packed till it creaked and sighed. I recall a tennis game at night which was a little idea of my own. With phosphorus on the tennis balls, back and forth they flew like stars. Shrieks and breathless voices. Midnight supper in the house. "There's to be some punch to this party!" I vowed, and I went to the piano. "Put out the lights!" I shouted. We had a cotillion in the dark!

And there were sunset picnics on the rocks down by the Sound, with a huge bonfire there which as night drew on sent fiery messages up to the stars. A scene for serious "two-some" talks and songs, good old ones—yes, God help me, songs of my day, "before the war." None of this jazz or ragtime. For dances, Sousa two-steps; for sentiment, Seeing Nelly Home. Then there was Dancing at Oddfellow's Hall, and Suwanee River, Old Black Joe and Oh, That Little Old Red Shawl. What is there now to take their place? I have wonderful ears for hearing, in these silent nights alone; and often when the honk and thunder of an automobile has passed, I seem to hear a more leisurely sound, compounded of the thud of hoofs, the rattle of wheels, the strum of guitars and a rich swelling harmony of gay singing voices Unreal and ghostly. That is gone.

But enough of my sentimental ears! In those days, when her mother would let her, young Dorothy—who was as round as before, a stout little girl curly headed and blonde, with an anxious air of enormous importance—eagerly trailed after us. With Lucy she adored to have long joyous talks in corners. The two would whisper and giggle till you would have thought them both of an age. And emerging from such confabs, Dorothy's shining vivid blue eyes would eagerly rove from her cousin to every young man in the room. Not a sign of a romance yet, but she watched on excitedly.

I had not had a chance at Lucy alone, but both of us knew that before very long we would certainly take a long ride together. It had to be done. We never missed. And so, one lovely afternoon, we mounted our horses (gifts from Dad) for a twenty mile ride back through the hills. And after a few good canters, we walked our horses and we talked.

At first we spoke of the giddy dance Aunt Fanny was leading poor old Dad. She was getting ready, Lucy said, to make him build in Newport soon. I snorted. Things were getting pretty rotten in this country. Steve was one of the last of those who could fight their way up from the bottom, I said, and the masses were all getting sore. Strikes and slums and anarchists—and on top, the millionaires. Look at us. From Aunt Amelia's home, which was the good old American stuff, where were we going? I to the slums. Lucy to the society crowd.

"That's America," I said gloomily. Then Lucy's voice with a chilling note:

"You talk as though I liked it."

"Like what?" I had forgotten her. I was thinking of what a great writer I'd be. How I would thunder at it all! My sister answered sharply.

"The life I have back there in town."

"You do like it."

Angry silence. Then she gave a sudden laugh.

"How young you are!"

I started—frowned.

"I am, am I?"

"Very!"

"How am I?"

This started a long discussion on what we meant by being young. Steve was dragged in. He was twenty-seven. I seemed "a mere child" beside him, she said. I asked her to prove it. We analyzed Steve and then Aunt Amelia. She would always be young, we agreed. We analyzed ourselves and the nation—youthfully and solemnly—and came back to the fact that we were young.

Then Lucy gave her horse a cut and we raced joyously down the road. Around a turn we met a steam roller. Both horses swerved and Lucy was thrown. In a farmer's buggy I took her home. She had broken her arm, and Steve set it that evening, while she clinched her teeth and smiled. Once or twice she whispered, "Damn!" Even to a brother she looked rather beautiful—and Steve was having no easy time. When he hurt her, he went rather white; though he kept smiling all the while and talking in a low steady voice. He had not been much with Lucy here. All that he had heard from me about her giddy doings in town had made her a figure so remote from the hospital world in which he lived. This sudden intimacy was a jolt. And Lucy made the most of it. In the days that followed, she took a devilish delight in this doctor-and-patient business. She treated him with a deep respect, mischievous flashes in her eyes. And poor old Steve was taking it hard. Despite his friendly casual tone and the jokes with which he tried to meet that maddening deference of hers, I could feel he was swearing under his breath.

I was not the only observer. Young Dorothy looked eagerly on. Not a word or a look or a quiver escaped her. Breathlessly she confided to me that the two were "madly in love with each other. I'm positive—perfectly positive!" And off she pranced to peek through the door. After this, she made herself just as helpful as she could be. Anxiously, before he came, she would suggest to Lucy what gown to wear, a brooch, a ribbon, a new way of doing her hair. She would do this in the most casual way. And by merest accident, too, she would meet Steve upon the stairs and abruptly she would drop remarks. She was at her piano practice one afternoon when he arrived—and at once she began to play, "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes." In brief, she encouraged this affair with a conspicuous secrecy that told the very trees outside, "They are madly in love with each other!" Lucy, of course, was highly amused, and even encouraged the fat little imp. Steve shortened his visits to the house.

But when her arm was out of the cast, Lucy all of a sudden grew very nice and friendly. She asked Steve to stay to supper, and she insisted until he gave in. Aunt Amelia was away and Dorothy was sent to bed. And giving us coffee in front of the fire, in the most friendly way in the world she inquired about our plans, what kind of a place we were going to live in, just how we meant to furnish the rooms and get our meals. She laughed at our answers, called us "poor lambs," and offered to help. She became serious, talked of Steve's work and grew sympathetic, much impressed at the thought of the lives he would help to save. And she did it nicely, sensibly. She threw no embarrassing halo about him. Instead, she envied him his job and contrasted his life with her own. Without saying too much, she made him feel how discontented she was with her life, made him feel her warm and intimate, with a beauty and a temperament such as he had never known. She played the devil with poor Steve.

And she left the next day for a house party over on Long Island.

CHAPTER III

1.

I AM finding that this book of mine, a crowded, restless narrative, is to turn this way and that, its personal figures seized upon by influences from outside, its story often left on the road while it wanders into enormous fields of life for certain memories which in my present state of mind take hold upon my interest. So in this chapter it will be.

Down into "the slums" to live for a year. There was "punch" to that. I was twenty-one. What did I know of poverty? My newspaper work had given me only glamorous glimpses of that long tedious desperate drama which is entitled "Being Poor." But even in those callow days, I did not go down to the poor to "uplift" them; I went for what I considered then a perfectly good and legitimate reason—to dig stories out of their lives. And if those stories and those lives could make me any wiser to the truth about the town, I was quite ready to be shown. Vaguely I had heard about the socialists and anarchists. A little exploration now into something dark and grim, but tense and fascinating, too.

Not to be discouraged by the tall bare tenement buildings, stinking streets and dirty crowds, every hour I could spare I spent in exploring the neighborhood where Steve was to do his work; and toward the end of August I found a promising place for our home. Our rooms looked on a little square which extended down to the river front, to a ferry house with wharves on each side, steamers, tugs and barges, fishing schooners and "deep water" sailing craft—the last of their kind—their great bowsprits reaching in over the street. Here were little restaurants, shops, saloons and brothels. At night weird cries and songs were heard, and sometimes a shot rang out. High over all reared the dark sweeping arch of the Bridge against the stars. In the tenements close by were people from all over the world. Seventeen nationalities were packed into a single block. Here indeed was the melting pot!

I had rented an old sail-loft up over a ship chandlery. Under my direction, plumbers and carpenters went to work; and when they got through, the dim dusty old loft had become a kind of studio—with a couple of bedrooms and a bath and a kitchenette built in behind. I discovered a Danish woman nearby who agreed to come and cook for us. To heat the studio I procured a tall monster of a stove, and on the walls I hung dusky old pictures of ships that I found in the neighborhood. And I found ancient seamen's chests and outlandish vases, strings of old ship signal flags. After the whole scene was set, I lit the lamps and then my pipe, and settled down with a sigh of content. Steve said, "It'll do," and went to bed. To my imprecations he called back.

"I like it, sonny—damn fine place. But I'm dead tired. Me for the slats."

He had already begun his survey of the big tenement block close by. Several generations ago, the buildings there had been the homes of the "best families" in New York. Now they were rotting to decay. In the small yards behind them, more tenements had been built in, leaving rear courts that were nothing but wells. The privies were there, and bedraggled children, babies, cats, and a few peevish hens. Year by year the air and sunlight had been crowded out of the block. The spacious rooms of the old mansions had been divided long ago into cramped little chambers, where T. B. germs by millions thrived. In a slow deliberate accurate way Steve traced the records of these rooms; and the story of each rotten old flat read in his record something like this:

"1891—Sweeney family in. Man heavy drinker—contracted T. B.—lost job—family moved out. 1892—Harmon family in—man, wife, mother and two children—wife contracted Pul. T. B.—refused hospital—child T. B. Laryngitis—family out. 1894—Schwartz family in—widower, sister and five children—baby and two children contracted T. B.—two dead—1 cripple—family out. 1896—Giuseppi Manetti and wife—bride and groom—wife pregnant—T. B. complications—mother and child both died—man out."

So ran these naked histories—definite proofs that the Great White Plague, instead of being a hopeless hereditary disease, was contracted through infection and could be done away with. A message of hope—and a challenge.

"Once we have driven it home," said Steve, "it's up to the people to do the rest—clean out these stinking tenements. I wonder if they care a damn?" Then he looked at me with a bright idea. "Why don't you have a try at this? Help us reach the public mind. Take these records, the dry bones, and dress 'em up in flesh and blood. Make these little corpses talk, and tell how they were murdered by the town. Write some thrillers."

And I did. I persuaded my editor that this was the start of a big crusade, that our paper ought to take the lead. And I spent my days and nights in the block, in and out of those dark, stuffy rooms—while Steve, to my immense disgust, made me drink a quart of milk and take a half dozen raw eggs a day. From neighbors, priests, policemen, druggists, I filled in the records with their memories of the dead. And I talked with the dying. Nearly all of them clung to the hope that this was only a common cough. Even those who lay on their beds and fought for breath held on to that hope like a gleaming cross—till the priest arrived with the crucifix.

"It used to be called the Long Block," I wrote in my first article. "The people call it the Lung Block now."

This was a lie, for the new name was my own invention. But it took hold and stuck to the place, to the righteous indignation of every landlord round about. My stories were read by the citizens, and soon I was known through the neighborhood. Promptly I was invited to join the genial district club that ran the local politics; and two young socialist tailors, mere boys, enticed me into a café and there in a long fervid talk urged me to join their brotherhood and free the world from slavery. But I was too absorbed in this block to have time for the whole world's salvation. Here were a dozen men, women and kids who had become good friends of mine and were slowly dying of T. B. What could I do? After much trouble I secured a free bed in a hospital uptown, and one afternoon I took a thin little Jewish tailor up on the Third Avenue El. On the ride he was silent, he looked at his hands. He had a fat wife and five children. He was twenty-six years old. At the hospital when they stripped him, I wished I had not stayed in the room. A little skeleton, thin as a rail, skin drawn tightly over the bones.

"Gloomy stuff, this," I wrote that evening. "Yes, my friend, but you'll have to bear up under it, sitting in your easy chair."

I was bitter that night. I had no faith in world-wide revolution then—all such talk seemed piffle to me. The people uptown were the only ones who could clean up this mess, and they didn't care. And so in my story I stormed a bit and made that little living corpse say bitter things to this land of the free. As a matter of fact, he had said only "nein." He would not stay in the hospital, and on the El he sat by my side quite motionless, looking at his skinny hands. After his death I got money from Dad and shipped his family out to St. Joe, where they had some relatives. I used what money I could raise on other T. B. citizens. But what an exasperating lot! Fix it all up for a hospital bed. The proposed patient would shake his head and die with his wife and children, meanwhile giving them his disease.

"The hospital is a bad place, my boy," said one old Irish woman. "Have ye heard of the Black Bottle now? It's that the doctors make ye drink when they're sick of seein' yez around. Then ye die—like as not without any priest."

A trip to the country was not so bad. It was hard to get grown "lungers" to go, but they would often send a sick child if the money was forthcoming. Still, even here, there were stumbling blocks. In November I had it arranged to send a little Irish girl to a sanitarium up-State; but first, on Steve's orders, I took her to a dispensary nearby, to have her adenoids out. Years later I saw this operation performed on a small half-brother of mine. That kid had two doctors and a nurse, and they gave him ether. This kid was simply put down in a chair, was seized and held, and while she screamed like a wild little beast the adenoids were torn out of her. She went stone deaf the following week.

Blame that doctor? Not at all. He was young and poor, he was over-worked, and he did this sort of thing free of charge, because the town wouldn't pay enough to have such jobs done decently. Why should the doctors give themselves? Nobody else did. How about me? Yes, I actually worked for awhile and maybe I saved a life or two. But meanwhile I was writing all this, building up my own career. And back in my lamplit studio, engrossed in the writing I would get rid of the dull and commonplace despair. To get the "punch" and color I would haunt those sinister rooms with ghosts—those of the present quite ignored by the fastidious fantoms of a hundred years ago. I would catch the faint clear echoes of the stately minuet. Some of those ghastly wrecks of homes still had the beautiful doorways of the late Colonial days—"doorways leading in to death." With a blush I heard my editor's growl:

"Look here, Larry, cut this out. Ghostly figures are O. K.—but nix on the death stuff. Understand? Repression, my boy. You're learning, though—coming on pretty fast." And with an envious grunt he said, "Wish *I* were your age."

That was it—I was young. And though I learned repression now, it only made the more fresh and deep the exuberant fancy underneath. Even old Steve could say things that would give me sudden ideas. One muggy night the end of October, he rose and wearily stretched himself.

"God," he muttered, "how I wish that one of those great winds we knew, when we were kite-flying kids at home, would come with a rush and a roar and a yowl into this stinking city block."

And in the studio half the night, I sat writing, "A Great Wind." I pictured a mighty wind from the sea sweeping into the stifling town and working countless miracles—cooling ugly tempers down, giving life and hope to the dying, and to all the self important scurrying little pigmies here bringing visions of the stars. People had grown small and mean. I remembered what my aunt had said about the generous passions born in the years of the Civil War. Gone and forgotten. Petty people, sordid times, dreams of the dollar and nothing beyond it. Yes, great winds were needed now.

"I'll keep this sketch," I told myself, "until some fine big windy night—then turn it in."

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2.

I was through with writing of T. B. For two months I had cried the shame of the Lung Block from the housetops. I had done my bit, and I did not propose to get morbid and see things out of proportion. So I turned to the ships close by. By day and by night, from the far corners of the heaving ocean world came seamen, stokers, engineers, cooks, cabin boys—and I met quite a few; for the stout Danish woman who cooked for us took sailor boarders in her flat just around the corner. Though a deeply religious Lutheran who could spend an hour on her knees and get up fresh as a daisy, she was a woman of liberal views, and she mothered these lads in a way of her own. When a sailor came ashore, she would give him a good hot supper; and while he told his story, a few stiff drinks could do him no harm. Then if she could start him off with a friend to a good stiff prize fight somewhere, the chances were that after the fight, well tired out, he would come straight back and go to bed. When she was able to put through this little religious program, she would be happy as a lark. For didn't she know the she-devils about, who would rob a poor sailor of his last cent?

Yes, she knew the life of the sea. Starting as a captain's wife, on tossing ships she had nursed the sick and heard their last confessions. She knew the tricks of quarantine; she knew the ways of epidemics. In India she had fought the Plague, the Cholera in Egypt. As a nurse she had taken part in the Gordon Relief Expedition. Later she had settled down in one port after another; and in these ports she had mothered her boys until now she had a family of wanderers from all over the world, who would drop in at her small flat with stories to tell and gifts for her—shawls, queer vases, heathen gods, old rings and brooches, tiny ships, dolls, babies' shoes, and last letters from lads who had died in distant ports. Around these things were clustered tales of the world of *wanderlust*. And I wrote them under the title, "The Things in Mrs. Dagmar's Flat."

There was one little book that had been left by a tall serious engineer. Its pages were soiled and thumbed with reading. Its title was, "Good Manners Ashore." I remember one chapter, "A Dinner Party," wherein you were directed to begin your conversation by turning to the guest at your side and affably remarking,

"So you, too, are a friend of our charming hostess."

What hands had thumbed those pages so?

As I delved into the neighborhood, the word "slums" dropped out of my mind, and with it any vestige of my fancied superiority. When a certain wretched yellow sheet ran a story on how the son of J. Carrington Hart, the millionaire, had gone to live among the poor, I took this story over to the political club down there, and while the songsters in the club hummed a sweet low accompaniment I solemnly chanted the noble words which the woman reporter, who had never seen me, quoted as mine in the interview:

"It shall be my aim to live for awhile—down among the lowly—and bring a little sunshine—to those whose lives are full of clouds."

A roar of laughter from the poor. Then somebody ordered up the drinks and they sang, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

Here was the gang in politics, a baffling mixture of good and bad. The club leader, a young Irishman, was tall, slender and clean cut. I never saw him drink or smoke. His only vice was gambling. He sat in frequent little games and was well known out at the tracks. I remember him, one autumn night, coming back from the races to the club. Walking rapidly down the long pool room, he threw remarks this way and that. "All right, Jim, I saw the Judge"—"Say Tony, I landed that job for your brother"—and so on all the way down the line. At the end of the room on a low platform I sat with him at his desk while he went through his evening mail.

There were nearly a hundred letters that night. Men wanting jobs for themselves or their friends, wives whose husbands were in jail, widows who could not pay the rent, all appealed to the boss for aid. In other letters were tickets to tenement balls and other affairs; and not only would he buy the tickets, but he or one of his henchmen would be present at each affair. For he and his kind were mixers. They not only did things for their friends but did them in human intimate terms. And though the power thus secured was used to steal the public money and protect the landlords of foul old tenement buildings, brothels, "creep holes," gambling dives—still they kept in power. Why?

Because the reformers from uptown, gentlemen who now and then tried to clean up the city, were not mixers but uplifters. Did they care to eat or drink, laugh or sing or dance with the poor? No, they simply exhorted them to be good and vote for reform. And when the benighted poor refused to be uplifted, the gentlemen sighed and went back uptown; and in commerce and in high finance they, too, did favors for their friends at the expense of the public. So the genial gang idea ran through the warp and woof of life in American cities, east and west, until in high circles as in low the word "graft" became a familiar term. And there were millions of nameless victims who in poverty undeserved, and in vice, disease and death, paid the vast grim price of it all.

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3.

I helped the "Sporting Parson" in his boys' club down the street. In the past, from Minnesota to Maine this big-hearted preacher had tramped his way through the northern lumber camps. Here he had a couple of rooms, where every night some forty boys met to shout and sing 'round an old piano, and to fight. For the Sporting Parson had broad views. We would chalk a ring on the floor, and within it two lads who had put on the gloves would go at each other, cheered by the crowd. Dimes, nickels and pennies quickly changed hands. Faces grew bloody. Deafening din! So this minister of the gospel shielded his little flock from harm. Vigilantly he would watch for foul play. With a roar he would grab the offender.

"If any feller thinks he can hit below the belt—or use his knees or a knife," he would shout, "and get away with it in this club, he's mistaken! Understand?"

Night after night and week after week, he taught the principles of fair play to the toughest and the wildest youngsters in the neighborhood.

"The way to succeed with a boys' club and make a fine big hit uptown," he said to me as he puffed his old black briar pipe one evening, "is carefully to gather in all the very good little boys; and when they have come with their knitting, send for your supporters uptown and show what a miracle you have performed. They'll build you a big club house then and have you up to dinner or to talk in churches; and with a solemn look they'll say, 'That man is doing a great work.' But if Christ Almighty were here tonight, it's dollars to doughnuts he'd say to me, 'You're all right, pal—go after the tough ones—the fellers that are headed for jail'."

These chaps were not only headed for jail but many got there frequently. For drunkenness, for petty theft and even burglary and assault, they were always getting "pinched." Sometimes he would get them off. More often they would be sent away; and from such lads, on their return, I heard hair-raising little yarns of prison life told in the club—while the younger boys listened respectfully. Yes, they were tough, from a wild little world. There was a feud raging in those days. The Italians, known as "Wops," were moving into the neighborhood, and the indignant Irish were up in arms to keep them out. Street battles between gangs took place, and often a boy would appear at the club with a black eye or a bloody arm.

I remember one called Harpy. He was a short swarthy Wop with dull heavy features. A bit of a burglar in his day, he had "done time" and had reformed. By day he drove a wagon, by night he played the piano here, pounding out the ragtime with a gleam in his dull eyes. For the glory of Italy, more than once he came in with his shirt soaked in blood, but this did not seem to trouble him. What made him brood by the hour—on his driver's seat by day and on his dirty bed at night where he lay breathing hard in the dark—was the way his girl was treating him.

The plain fact of the matter was that she would not be his girl at all. Nor did I blame her. I caught sight of her first at a public school entertainment one night. The school, in its baffling task of trying to stop racial enmities and fuse into one new nation the children of many races here, was giving a Dance of All Nations that night. And Harpy's girl danced for Italy. A lithe supple creature of seventeen, her dusky beauty and black hair set off by the vivid colors of the peasant costume, she seemed to move on velvet springs—bending, swaying, tossing her head. And hearing the heavy breathing of Harpy close behind me, I thought,

"You poor devil, what chance have you got?"

I found that she was going about with a handsome young bartender, "Little Dan," a friend of mine. And through him I met the girl one night. I had been quite a dancer at college "proms," but never at college or uptown had I held a creature like this in my arms—velvety, yielding, drifting along like a dream of a most maddening kind. I had many dances with her that night; and on other nights in crowded halls in various parts of the city, with Little Dan and an extra girl or even with this one alone, I drifted through that warm glad world made up of the sons and daughters of the tenements of New York. And Little Dan allowed it. Why? In those unregenerate days, with "white slavers" thick as bees, in the deafening rocking halls where the liquor flowed so free and a gent danced with his derby hat tilted rakishly to one side—to keep out of trouble it had grown to be a rigid custom that a youth, if honest-intentioned, kept his girl strictly to himself. But Little Dan was a friend of mine and he felt that I was "on the level." Besides, he was in a puzzled mood.

"It's like dis, Larry," he said to me. "I like her—she's some goil, all right—an' I don't want to start anyt'ing. See? I never yet started a goil to de bad an' I don't intend to now. Understand? An' if I ring de wedding chimes, me dad an' me mudder will raise hell. She's a Wop. Understand? Dat's de hell of it!"

So he was puzzled. Which way to jump? He was in love up to his ears—but she was a Wop and he was Irish. Her father peddled from a cart, his father owned a big saloon. Could he ever bridge the gap? He needed time to think it out. So he welcomed me into the affair; and I found myself a go-between. For the lady confided. Though as a rule she would dance the whole evening without a word, on the way home with her strong supple fingers clutching my arm she would abruptly flash out, in her broken English, some question about Little Dan. Though well aware of the obstacles to making such an ambitious match, she counted on her glossy hair, her warm red lips and her gorgeous young body, to bring him to terms. If only she could do it in time! She would soon be old! She was seventeen!

So through those first crowded months she moved, a gay, disturbing figure. And it never crossed my mind—the tragedy lurking just ahead.

She told me abruptly one evening how Harpy the Wop was bothering her. Twice on the street he had come up behind and hugged her in his dirty arms. She had grown to hate him passionately. She would have him "pinched" if he kept on. I told her I'd see what I could do. He promised me to leave her alone, and apparently he did so. She never spoke of him again. But one night through my window I heard a commotion down the street—shouts, shrill whistles, people running. One of the usual fights, I thought. But as the uproar swiftly grew, I looked again, and saw at the head of the noisy mob, between two cops, with torn disheveled dress and hair—that girl—my dancing partner! I got to the station-house just in time to hear the charge. Motionless and statuesque, charged with murder she replied in a queer quiet voice which was broken at times by a violent sob. Harpy had come into her home and found her alone. She had fought him off at first with her hands, with the unwashed supper plates and knives. Then, driven into a corner, she had snatched her father's pistol.

"I got him. I am glad," she said.

I went to see her in the Tombs, and it gave me a cold feeling to see her there in Murderers' Row. Till then I had not realized how close we had been—just dancing. I did not write her story then, but others did, and at her trial I was brought into the affair. On the stand, in cross-examination the young assistant district attorney, turning to me with a cynical smile, said pleasantly,

"You have testified that you know the defendant. Now will you tell this court and jury whether you ever took her out to dance halls, Mr. Hart?"

"I did."

"How often?"

"I don't remember."

"So many as that. Did you ever take her alone, Mr. Hart?"

"Yes."

"To what halls did you take her?" I mentioned three.

"Did you ever hear those halls described as the toughest joints in town, Mr. Hart?"

"No."

"Did you dance late with her there?"

"Sometimes I did."

"And after that?"

"I took her home."

"Always, Mr. Hart?"

"I did."

A chuckle from the jury. "Wise kid," muttered one. The attorney smiled:

"Now, Mr. Hart, will you tell the jury whether this girl ever told you the reason why—although she was willing and eager to go with you, the son of a well known millionaire, to the toughest joints in the city and dance there with you half the night—she had nothing but rebuffs for the young Italian lad who came to her in his working clothes to tell her of his love for her?"

"Yes," I replied, "she told me the reason. She said that he often came to her drunk and that twice on the street he came up from behind and—'hugged' her was the word she used."

"Did you never hug her, Mr. Hart?"

"I did not."

Loud mirth from the jury. I heard the whisper—"lucky boy." Large headlines in the evening papers. Disgust and consternation up at Dad's Park Avenue home. He sent for me that evening.

"Well, Larry?"

"Well, Dad?"

"Pretty raw stuff."

"Rotten, Dad. And I'm sorry about it on *your* account, disgusted with the whole affair."

"Don't you think," he asked me hopefully, "it's time you went to work in the mills?"

"Sorry Dad. I want to write—and I'm getting a lot of real stuff down there."

"So it seems," he answered.

The girl was acquitted the next day and was brought home in an open carriage decked with flowers. But in that triumphant reception I was able to keep out of sight, like Little Dan. For the lady had no need of us now. She had been so wonderfully advertised. An avalanche of letters came pouring in upon her, demands for her picture and offers of marriage. Up sailed the market value of her beauty in the town. And many high class brothels through their agents did their best. They failed to get her only because—she married Little Dan? Oh no. She was far above him now. She signed up with a Broadway musical show.

And then, feeling older and wiser, I wrote the story of "Harpy's Girl." But I did not publish it at the time.

. . . .

4.

Numberless other stories came to me in the spring of that year. At the precinct station I would sit in the captain's room, watching through the open door the events of a Saturday night. Long stretches of silence, the fat desk sergeant drowsing over the heavy books in which were recorded so many grim tales that there seemed to be no room for more. But from outside came sudden shouts and laughing curses, peals of mirth, the shuffle of feet; and from that ceaseless hurly-burly, figures stalked abruptly in, or were dragged in protesting. Mere fragments in my memory now:

A scared but defiant boy of ten. A pickpocket in the first stage of the game, he had followed a stout old woman up a steep dark flight of stairs and had tried to pick the purse out of her stocking. But she had grabbed him. "Aw she lied—she did so!" he declared. "I never! . . . Naw!" were his replies. At the door to the cell room he turned back, gave a tense little laugh, then disappeared.

A thin young German came in on a stretcher. His hands, bound together with a cord, lay on his stomach, waxy white. Face the same color. Around his neck was still the bit of clothes-line with which he had hanged himself. "D-D-D," was inscribed in the blotter. "Dutch, Drunk and Despondent." Off to the Morgue.

A young Swedish girl about eighteen, rather stout, very rosy, came in one night. She had merry little twinkling eyes and lips that did not need the paint. She smiled at the young cop at her side and up at the sergeant, too. She seemed to me to be asking them, "But what would you do without me?" They seemed to be answering, "God knows."

A terrified little Russian Jew. Street peddling without a license. With intense dismay on his face, he craned his neck up at the desk and screwed all his features tight in the effort to understand. He poured forth a torrent of Yiddish words, and sobbing he was dragged to the cell room. "Oy-oy-oy!" The door banged to.

A bony little woman, a Wop, rushed into the station excitedly—with gestures, shrugs, a volcano of talk and wild appeals. Her bambino had swallowed a fish bone! Was choking to death! Oh Mother of God!

A silent smiling youngster came stalking in with a lofty air. Blood from a bullet hole in his arm. Who did it? "Say—do I look like a squealer?" He wanted no help from the law of the land, for there was a deeper law down here which said to him, "This is your affair." He turned with a sharp jerk, straining his ears. From the distance several shots were heard. I ran out, and looking up to the dark sky-line of the Lung Block against the glow of the city beyond, I thought I saw small shadowy forms dart over the roofs. More pistol shots. The law of the land was doing its best.

But little by little the uproar subsided. The cops came back to the station house. And the youngster with the bloody arm smiled at them still in his lofty way, as though he were saying, "Leave him to me."

Long before this, Pop Jehosaphat had taken me about with him on wider explorations into the criminal life of the town. And through him I met Charley Gear.

Charley had come into hard times. A fine crook once, a pickpocket living off the fat of the land, known and respected by thousands—he had reformed and married a widow and settled down as the janitor of an old office building. Dismally his tedious days were spent in virtuous overalls; but often in the evenings, in a frock suit with a lavender scarf, he would take me about to certain cafés where you had to knock in peculiar ways in order to gain admittance. Charley was a handsome man, with a drooping brown moustache. He had an excellent tenor voice, and urged to the piano he would sing such yearning songs as, "Please, Mama, Buy Me a Baby," and would be encored many times by the clever crooks who sat at the tables with expensive young dames at their sides. They treated him as they would a friend who has tamely let some woman nag him into giving up cigarettes. But they liked him still. Good old Charley. They knew he would not be such a sneak as to smuggle a "squealer" into their midst. And they were right. He made me agree to write nothing that could get any friend of his into trouble. As a rule, he read my copy.

So it happened, late in the spring, that through a tip from Charley I was able to pull off a "scoop" that made my paper proud of me. And because of this I was called downtown. At police headquarters a certain official, whose name was known all over the land, eyed me for a moment and said,

"Mr. Hart, a house on Fifth Avenue"—and he mentioned the address—"was entered at four o'clock this morning. Among other things they got a pearl necklace valued at forty thousand."

"Yes, sir."

"Your paper ran the story."

"Yes, sir."

"You wrote it."

"Yes, sir."

"And your paper went to press at one o'clock."

"Yes, sir."

"What have you to say for yourself?"

For a moment or two I thought very hard.

"My paper pays me to get the news."

"It does—but when you pick up news of a crime *about to be committed*."

An ominous pause.

"What should I have done, sir?"

"Why not have informed the police?"

I looked back at him, undecided, and then took a chance:

"But look here, Chief, this thing was so big. How could I have any idea that the whole New York police force would be asleep to a thing so big that even a cub reporter knew it?" I stopped, with a genial little smile. There was no response. I went farther. God help me, it was my only hope. "If you don't agree with me, Chief, why not test it out in court? Hold me as accessory to the crime. Let my paper run the story of my trial from day to day; and see if the people of New York don't agree with me—that I, a mere cub reporter, ought not even to have dared to suspect that I could tell the police force anything they didn't know."

Thank Heaven, I had him smiling now. The smile broke into a gruff little sound between a grunt and a chuckle.

"I knew your father. You're like him," he said.

"Thank you, sir."

And I was free. Royally was I feasted by gleeful journalists that night, and back in the Lung Block I was loved as "the kid who put one over on B——."

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5.

And I was cocky for a time. A precocious lucky youngster, I had made a remarkable start; and there were many people only too ready to flatter the son of Carrington Hart. With such an easy quick success, how could I get any real understanding of how it feels to be down and out? I was only an eager hungry boy picking up impressions. But thinking myself extremely profound, I would argue by the hour with Steve about graft, politics, and prostitution. And Steve with that dry smile of his would take me down a peg or two. His grim job would jerk me back from the glamor to the naked truth—that in spite of all the drama here, these people were getting a raw deal.

We had long talks in a small café. It was next door to a book shop, where to my astonishment I found mixed in with the popular stuff such authors as Darwin, Spencer, Karl Marx, Tolstoi, Kropotkin, and Zola. Half at least I had never read, but I knew the names. Deep fellows, regular highbrows in fact. Who the devil read them here? The chap who kept the little shop turned out to be an anarchist. And that struck me as funny, for he was such a mild little man. At first he did not welcome us—but later, learning of Steve's work, he let us into his circle of readers in the small café next door. For me they had nothing but contempt, but Steve's work was different. Like a pack of publishers hunting a "best seller" down, so these fellows fairly itched to get Steve's cold bare record of deaths and publish it in their radical press. More black evidence against the capitalistic system! Anarchists and socialists, they argued on into the night; and listening to the news they gave of similar groups large and small, in cities, towns and mining camps, and in the stoke-holes out at sea, I grew vaguely conscious of a vast world-wide revolt brewing among the masses. The *Prolétariat*. There was fascination in that word. And the feeling of impending drama, great as all humanity, came to me at times as they talked.

But only for a moment. They seemed such insignificant chaps, so obstinate, dogmatic; so half-baked were their theories. Steve calmly riddled them full of holes by the shrewd keen questions that he asked. He went back to his job and I to mine. And in the local political club where I was wise to politics, and in the precinct station where I had learned the power of cops—I felt those dreams of revolution through the ballot or the bomb fade away into thin air. Crazy highbrows of the slums. I wrote them up occasionally.

So through that turgid crowded year, Steve and I came face to face with poverty, vice and crime and death, and the first grumbles of revolt. But though engrossed in these ominous scenes, I can see now as I look back that we were still more absorbed in ourselves, in our youth and our deepening friendship. Both of us knew that we ourselves were going to escape all this, to rise up out of it, forge ahead. We saw long splendid vistas opening. Steve, intense and "scientific" (to a degree that he smiles at now) down there in the jungle fighting disease could look out of it to a surgeon's career—while I, beneath my bitter moods and my warm friendship for the poor, knew that I was coming on rapidly as a writer now. And as the son of Carrington Hart I knew what was waiting for me uptown.

CHAPTER IV

1.

FOR I was already in demand. In the eyes of many girls uptown, I was "Bohemian," "clever," "queer." Moreover I was an exuberant youngster, apt to be the life of a party. When I left the slums I left them. I refused to be inveigled by solemn young maids into accounts of how and why and wherefore I was championing the poor. I told dialect stories rather well, I could laugh till the tears rolled down my cheeks, I could sing, I could dance, and I was precocious, mixing with older girls and men. So by mail and telephone the invitations began to pour in. And though I often told myself that all this was very tame compared to the life I was leading downtown, I liked it exceedingly nevertheless. I liked to go to a dance uptown, pick out a pretty well-dressed girl and "rush" her until the excited young thing and I were all but engaged to each other. Then in the hours before the dawn back to the tenements, grim and dark, except for a few lighted windows that set me to imagining the early risers, the late watchers. Yes, by God, this world was real—the other, merest fluff and sparkle. Up into my studio home, off with my dress suit, into pajamas. Then a last pipe and drowsy thoughts; and so into the deep, deep sleep of a shamelessly happy and lucky young man.

But my job on the paper made parties like that rather few and far between. More often I went to my father's home. Lower Park Avenue, in those days, was a fashionable quarter still. Dad's house—or rather, Aunt Fanny's, for it had been her family home—was a large compact affair as solid as brown stone could make it. It stood on a corner, with a capacious yard behind. And even the stables in the rear had an air of assurance, as though they were saying, "There will always be carriages, horses and a large fat coachman here." The house itself with its great brown stones appeared to be demanding, "Who speaks of apartment buildings?" The spacious halls and rooms within, and the broad winding stairway, seemed to murmur discreetly, "There will always be the rich." While back in the dining room certain very dignified but genial old decanters said casually, "There will always be wine."

I would drop in about five o'clock; and when, with a fine reserved smile of greeting, the butler took my hat and coat, I liked to go into a large dim room with the glow from a fire at one end, sink into an easy chair, take a paper and light a cigarette, feel everything inside of me relax and drift. I would fall asleep, to be wakened by a servant lighting the lamps or putting another log on the fire. It was so very restful here.

Then a merry burst of laughter would come down from the nursery, and I would go up to play with the children, who welcomed me in a joyous way that was good for any young man's soul. Louise was now a plump and winsome little girl of five; and her brother Carrington, who was not quite four years old, made up for any lack of stature by the stiff determination in his thick black hair, brushed straight back, and by the roguish gleam in his eyes as he watched his "brudder Larry" to see which way the pillow would fly, and by the terrific twist and heave of his stout limbs and tummy as he hurled the missile back. With what roars of delight he entered into those "rush-house" games of ours—while our sister squealed and clapped her hands, and the head nurse and the nursemaid tried to look amused and pleased as we smashed things all about. "Rush-house! Rush-house!

Rush-house!" shrieked that embryo millionaire. Why should he care what he smashed? Toys? There were toys all over the room, and three orderly closets stacked with them. On a doll's hat, just arrived, I caught a glimpse of the purchase tag. Eight dollars! And the whole room was like that. Still, by a miracle escaping any hint of vulgar display, the nursery had somehow achieved a simple cozy childlike air—the white painted little beds and chairs all just as innocent as lambs.

And when Aunt Fanny appeared in the doorway—whether in furs, just in from the street, or in a wrapper of soft silk, or already dressed for dinner—there was in my father's attractive young wife a gracious good-nature and content that left no doubt as to who had created this nursery, who had given these children life. Nor could there be any question as to the rightness and fitness, in this easy wealthy world, of the unobtrusively costly lives that she was planning for them both.

Aunt Fanny and I were on intimate terms. Gone was my early dislike of her. I was twenty-two—she was thirty-one. But while at times delightfully young, she could change in a flash and mother me. And at such moments, in some subtle way, she could make me feel very much a boy—herself immeasurably more wise in what she called "the things that count." Her life was so nicely rounded out. She persuaded me to go with her to church late one afternoon in Lent; and beneath the benevolent radiance of the serene old saints in the windows, listening to the organ and the rich sweet choir voices and to Aunt Fanny's voice at my side softly chanting the responses, I got an impression of deep wells of gracious assurance within her soul as to her social position both in heaven and on earth. Reverence? Yes, she was reverent here, humbly worshipping at the feet of a Great and Perfect Gentleman. "Do unto others?" Yes, she was tactful in the daily snarls of life

She could help her friends in situations she described as "difficult," she could keep her own troubles to herself, she could smile a beastly headache away, she could bravely and quietly endure the bearing of children. She was generous in her charities, especially those of a personal kind. "The poor ye have with you always."

A mighty pleasant chloroform—her effect on me was rather like that. She agreed that it was a good thing for a writer to have a close look at the poor. "Heaven knows they need all the writing and all the help we can give them, poor things." But from such talk she would soon turn to a more cheerful topic, my own life and my career. She was the first to whom I confessed my secret ambition to write plays. We discussed it in her box at the opera one evening when she had no guests.

"Poor lonely boy," she would smile at me, "when I've studied you and studied you till I know exactly what you need—then, Larry, I shall find you a wife."

At dinner parties sometimes she would ask me to fill in. On such evenings, with what easy charm she would preside at her table, all the while letting nothing escape her. For all my young sagacity, I missed so many innuendoes, sudden revelations of little volcanoes raging there. But after the guests had departed, my shrewd young mother would put me wise.

"Oh, Larry, Larry, what would you do without your mother?" she would smile. "My advice to you, poor dear, is never to marry without my consent."

I liked my young stepmother friend.

But how that young woman could get away with what is vulgarly known as cash! For the benefit of those mortals who will presently live in a world from which both the extremely rich and the damnably poor have disappeared, I hereby put it on record as a matter of historic fact—how Aunt Fanny spent her day and what it cost the world at large.

In a house run smoothly to the tune of about a hundred thousand a year, she was awakened at nine o'clock in a carved antique affair which on account of my ignorance I shall simply call a bed. For the same reason I shall not attempt to describe that luxurious room, nor the clothes, nor any of the rites performed by a skilful lady's maid about the person of my aunt. Her children came in to see her there. Later, several times a week, she went out in her carriage or *coupé,* with two men on the box and a crest on the door; and in every conceivable kind of shop, greeted with the deference of America, England, Germany, France, Russia, Italy and Japan, Aunt Fanny selected clothes, hats, gloves, shoes, slippers, jewels and furniture, rugs, toys, flowers and pictures from all over the face of the earth, and had them charged to her account. She loved to send little gifts to her friends, flowers to people sick or in trouble. Her wedding gifts alone, I learned, came to some fifty thousand a year.

Having spent a thousand dollars or two, she would lunch and rest for a little while. Then forth she would go to a dressmaker's or perhaps for a drive in the Park. Then tea at a friend's, or back at home she would sit with her children at their supper. And the later events of the evening—a dinner, the opera or a dance—were mere details compared to the plans which in that "children's hour" she made for those expensive kids and the larger and more costly household that she saw ahead.

Even now, I learned toward the end of the winter, she was expecting another child. And because she was having a "difficult" time, I saw less of her than I had before.

. . . .

2.

But more than Aunt Fanny, it was my father who attracted me to the house. For rather to my own surprise —and his, too, I fancied—there quickly developed between us a very deep and real affection. We liked to be in the same room—smoking, reading a book or a paper, throwing out occasional questions. Grunted answers. Silence again. But at times amazingly intimate talks. For now I could talk with him man to man, and it began to dawn upon me that my father was not old. I was struck repeatedly by the fact that he was "a comer" still, considered one of the rising figures in the world downtown.

At forty-eight he was short, thick-set, with grayish hair, smooth face, wide jaw and a voice as deep as mine. In his voice and in his shrewd blue eyes was a very human quality. He had taken a great liking for Steve and encouraged me to bring him to dine. Steve was at first reluctant; but discovering that in her condition Aunt Fanny kept to her room when he came, he let me bring him more and more. And my father took a keen interest in drawing us out. Not only did he like young men, but if he found them promising he was glad to help them, too. There were numberless such whom he had helped, and he liked to talk about them—both to take pride in what he had done and to prove the truth of his belief that young men of this kind were the strength of the nation. For the common herd of weaklings he had little but contempt. He put small faith in the new and elaborate plans of organized charity to do away with poverty by teaching the poor to help themselves. They could never help themselves. "It's all damned pooh-ba," he declared. He agreed that of course they should be helped, but he liked to do it in big-hearted fashion—a Thanksgiving turkey, a ton of coal, and not too many questions asked. I remember one night his quoting that little bit by O'Shaughnessey:

"Organized charity, measured and iced
In the name of a cautious statistical Christ."

His attitude toward my work was a flattering surprise to me. He had a queer respect for writers. He was not bothered in the least by the vague radical views I aired, so long as I made good as a writer. The ideas were mere wild oats. I think he hoped that I might end as managing editor of a paper to be owned and controlled by himself, and so play an active part in the big struggles he saw ahead. Upon my expanding opinions he acted like a great balance wheel. Apparently open-minded, he would draw me out with ease; and then to my surprise I would find that he, too, had once been through all this. Strikes, socialism, anarchy—he had come up against them in his mills. So far, he had been able to keep his plant an open shop; but watching every sign of unrest among the Irish and Italians, Poles, Germans and Hungarians there, he knew he was only postponing trouble, and he was always looking about for some safe way of meeting it. He had installed an insurance system and he was building homes for the men.

"Only a starter," he remarked. "We'll have to do much more than that."

Here in New York in the meantime, that great immigrant, Jacob Riis, had started the slogan, "Clean up the slums." And Dad was a strong backer of Riis. He admired the hope and vitality, the boundless energy of the man. And he felt the same way toward T. R., who was then Police Commissioner. I remember one night he had several men to dinner to talk of Roosevelt. These men subscribed to a Roosevelt fund; and their talk opened my eyes to the fact that even among the very rich there were certain liberal-minded ones who knew all about the slums I described and were only too ready to push reforms. They enlarged upon the idea I had received, first from the radical dreamers downtown and later from my father, about the stormy times ahead. Sagaciously I listened and wisely I sized up my Dad:

"He doesn't really belong with these chaps, for he's a mixer like myself. He would get on fine with the crowd down in my political club, but their methods are too raw for him. Now, thank God, he has found in T. R. a reformer and a gentleman and a great mixer all combined."

I became a Roosevelt "fan." But if anyone had told me that Dad had brought me around to this, I would have been most indignant.

This father of mine was full of surprises. His almost boyish hunger for life was the thing in him that appealed to me most. He took a bad cold that winter, which ran into pneumonia. It was a light case but it gave him a scare. And Steve, who was taking care of him, said,

"He's as superstitious as an old woman."

When Steve effected a rapid cure, they became even better friends than before. Already Dad was backing him. But though seeing the value of his work, what my father liked in him most was the fact that Steve regarded it as a mere stepping-stone in his career. Not that Steve was a climber in any selfish sense of the word; he meant to spend a large part of his life in service for the common good. But his work was to lie in surgery. For the knife he had a passion which to me was almost weird. And this surgeon's attitude made a strong appeal to my father.

"We need more surgery and less dope all through the nation," he once said.

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3.

Of my sister I saw very little that winter. It was not until spring that Lucy and I had any of our usual long and confidential talks.

Full of contradictions still, though frequently declaring herself sick and tired of this life, she had nevertheless gone drifting on through another season in New York. Drifted? Dashed is the better word; for Lucy had, if anything, gone at it harder than before—packing so much into her day that she was forever being late for one fool thing or another. As she came hurrying downstairs one night, I heard her murmur angrily,

"Every clock I look at is faster than the one before!"

A bang at the door, and she was off! To this frantic rush-about was added now a deeper zest; for a new suitor had appeared, known as "Kelly" Wallace. A rising young lawyer, he was a chap with a very decent sense of humor; but his genial friendly smile hid a law book underneath. A good fellow hard as nails, bristling with ideas as old as the Rock of Ages. Such was the impression I had from occasional glimpses when Lucy brought him to the house—obviously to be looked over. Aunt Fanny was non-committal, but Dad and I said stoutly, "No!" Uneasily we watched the affair, for the fellow was making headway fast. He was pushing her hard and it worried her. She knew that she was a drifter and that by a rush he might carry her off—and this made her quick changing moods more contradictory than before. Now angrily absorbed in deciding—a thing she had always hated to do; again all ease and unconcern, gaily letting things drift on.

Almost always when Steve was there she would come down and sit with us before going out to dine; and to Dad's ironic questions as to her giddy goings-on she would reply with a tolerant smile. She knew that he was proud of her. Moreover, she was well aware that not only Dad but Steve and I were all more than glad to have her there. So she flirted with all three of us. She looked very fascinating, those nights. Dark and slender—with an air. A beautiful neck and shoulders—generally under some chiffon stuff. Black hair very soft—no shine to it. Large features. Brows and lashes black, making a queer attractive contrast with those big gray eyes of hers, that would shimmer with amusement or contract and grow intent, as though she were asking, "What time is it now?"

With a frank and friendly interest she would throw questions at Steve and me. She wanted to come down to our rooms, but smilingly I put her off. I knew Steve did not want her there. Or did he? Often I would glance from him to my young sister. What little thing was she up to here? Although she seldom looked at Steve, I could see she was perfectly conscious of the disturbing effect upon him of her very fetching gown, her eyes and the quick friendly smile which at times without warning she would flash on this surgeon chum of mine. Often he would redden a bit and almost stammer his reply. But again he would take his time to it, looking back deliberately and holding Lucy's soft gray eyes with his own, which would smile in a curious fashion as he quietly answered her question. At such moments I would see a look absentminded and absorbed come on my young sister's face. What was she up to? Flirting with Steve?

"Not at all," I decided. Up out of the profundity of my knowledge of women came this thought: "She isn't thinking of Steve at all—she's thinking of that lawyer man. She's trying to size him up as a man by comparing him with the rest of us, and her feeling for him with her feeling for every other man she knows. And Steve is a fellow she has known ever since she was a kid. So she's using him as a measuring stick."

Pleased with my own perspicacity, it suddenly occurred to me that Lucy was my sister, that I was very fond of her, and that now it was decidedly up to me to take a hand. So I had a firm talk with her one day, wherein it appeared that to begin with she was more and more discontented with her present life. Aunt Fanny she detested.

"There's something so sweetly cocksure about her, so sleek and contented!" Lucy exclaimed. "And the way she uses her charms on poor Dad is sickening, perfectly sickening! At his age! I'd like to wring her neck!"

So much for home. Outside of that, the endless round of clubs and classes, parties of every conceivable kind. She had had three seasons, more than enough. Now she wanted to break away, get a home of her own and make a fresh start. And she had known Kelly Wallace for years. He was a thoroughly good sort—honest, kind and always good fun.

"That may be true," I retorted. "But there's no getting around the fact that the fellow is a lawyer." She threw at me a quick look of surprise.

"Well, what of it? What do you mean?"

I did not know exactly.

"Oh, I mean he's the kind that will never let anyone open his eyes to anything new that comes along. He's a lawyer—and for all you know he may even become a judge some day. Would you enjoy being a judge's wife?"

"I don't know," she said in a half startled tone. "I've never stopped to think of it."

"Well," I warned her glumly, "you'd better think of it now while there's time."

Then she gave a little laugh.

"When did you get this hatred of lawyers?"

"Oh, I've always hated the brutes."

"Larry! You haven't any such thing!"

On my attractive sister's face came a look of pleased affection. And I did something then which I do rather well—a trick few Yankees ever attempt, and when they do they bungle it. I had learned it from a friend, a drunken English actor. I bent over Lucy's hand and kissed it very nicely. And then I said,

"Oh yes, I have—ever since one of 'em tried to get you."

"That's very sweet of you, dear," she murmured.

"Well, how about it?"

"I don't know."

"You haven't accepted him, have you?"

My sister's look was reminiscent.

"No—yes," was her reply. Up I bounded.

"What do you mean?"

She smiled at me queerly.

"I've come pretty near it, I guess," she replied.

"Confound him——"

"Larry!"

I took her this time by the shoulders. No fool gallantry now!

"Do you love him?" I demanded. "Enough to live with him—all your life?"

"Oh, how do I know?"

And Lucy looked so doleful then, so young and forlorn and alone in the world, that I then and there determined to show her "real life" as compared to the fluffy existence she led, and at the same time to reveal to her what infinitely finer and deeper and more fascinating things there are to do in this modern world than to become a lawyer's wife. She seemed more than ready to come along. Shamelessly breaking appointments with "the Judge," as I called Wallace now, she showed herself so eager to explore the larger world with me, that I was at once embarrassed. How was I going to make good? It is easy to talk about all that; but to start out at seven o'clock of an evening with a hungry young thing who expects to be transformed for life by the great seething world you show her—let me tell you it's no easy job. The world won't seethe to order.

Crime. The weird tragic dramas of life. She at once suggested a look into that. I was dubious; and when I advised with my old friend Pop Jehosaphat, he was even more doubtful than I. Pop knew nothing of uptown girls: He had met one once, he told me; but at the time, having murdered her father, she was in far too excited a state to give him any broad insight into her normal habits of thought. He demurred. It was far from easy to get him even to dine with us; and when he did join us at Mouquin's one night, having had a hair-cut and donned a dress suit that caught him under the armpits, he heavily refused to thrill. With a forced smile, in a pompous tone, this chap who could hold a crowd of men for hours listening to his talk, his tales and his philosophies, now cut them down to stories and remarks so very trite, that I looked on him with gloomy surprise—which only increased his awkwardness. It was a dismal evening.

I gave up Crime—it wouldn't do. Vice? It was impossible. The *Wanderlust?* More promising. Suppose I brought my sister in touch with the heaving ocean world? Certainly that was large enough, and it ought to make "the Judge" look tame.

"Lucy," I said, "you must meet the Great Dane."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Dagmar, the woman who looks after our rooms."

"All right," said Lucy promptly. "It's about time you asked me there."

And I took her down the following week. Mrs. Dagmar was at first rather cold and ungracious; for the fact of the matter was that her ideas of cleanliness were as sensible as Steve's and mine, and no doubt she expected insulting remarks as to trivial dust and what not. But when Lucy showed nothing but delight in our lamp-lit studio home, the Great Dane warmed to her at once. She cooked a delicious supper, and though Steve was not at home that night we had a successful evening. The Great Dane talked of the Seven Seas with a convincing earnestness and a wealth of vivid detail. Later we went to her flat; and she told such stories there, to fit the various curios, that my sister was entranced.

"Who ever would have dreamed," she said, "that there was such a woman in New York—or such a home—or such a life?"

"How can a girl dream anything in that stuffy little Fifth Avenue world?"

An excellent start, and greatly encouraged I took her out for a look at the slums. Poverty and the masses, the surging anger of the poor—I tried earnestly to get this feeling over to my sister. In that small radical café I sketched the rotten state of things, the rank injustice in the world, the hopelessness of any appeal to the smug and easy people uptown, the deep exciting hope in the thought that all over the earth a million groups were rousing to the great revolt. I surprised her. I surprised myself. I caught a look on her face that said,

"Why Larry! You *believe* all this!"

And then in astonishment, I thought,

"She's right about it. By Golly, I do!"

Things went splendidly that night—until, as my voice grew rather loud, I attracted attention of others there; and before I knew it, Lucy and I were facing looks of utter contempt from all over the little room.

"Look at him," they seemed to say. "A young millionaire showing his girl the slums and trying to pose as a genuine Red."

My sister grew uneasy.

"Shall we be going, Larry?" she asked. I growled assent. And gloomily, as I paid the bill, I muttered,

"The revolution is all right—but the chaps who are in it have two-spot minds."

They had taken the wind out of my sails. With the revolution sagging fast, I walked her around the streets for a while. I was close to getting sick of this job. Why should not Steve lend a hand? An old friend of Lucy's, wasn't he? And yet he had been a quitter—he had not lifted a hand to help! I threw a glance at my sister.

Ever since we left the café she had been silent. Barely a word. What was going on in her mind? Girls were queer. I heaved a sigh. It was one of those warm lifeless nights that come sometimes in April.

"Let's go over to the rooms and see if Steve is back," I proposed. And this time we found him there. Bending over a table under a green-shaded light, with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, he was working on his report.

"That you, son?" he growled comfortably.

"Here's Lucy."

"What?"

He turned with a start.

"Oh—hello—good evening." Voice husky and distinctly tense. My sister smiled.

"Good evening, Steve—don't put on your coat—I won't be here but a minute," she said. "I've wanted so long to see how you lived."

Instantly I was out of the picture. The whole atmosphere of the evening changed. Lucy was a different girl. Though giving her assurance that she would not bother him long, she let that promise slip her mind, became intensely serious and questioned him about his work; and presently with her color high she was telling what she had seen that night—a thin young mother white as a sheet, with a baby in her arms, a crowd of small girls trying to dance, a larger girl exceedingly drunk, a number of sick people "looking like ghosts." Apparently it had hit her hard. She did not blame these people at all for being bitter. "I should certainly be, in their place!" As Lucy talked, Steve watched her with a queer steady light in his eyes. The end of it was that abruptly she asked us now, before she went home, to take her up into the Lung Block.

"Just for a minute. I'm not being morbid. But I'll never come here again—and I want to remember. Just one look."

We both held back, but she insisted. And a few minutes later, having entered the open door of one of the worst of the tenements and climbed a flight of the filthy stairs, in the dark stinking hall above we stood for a moment listening to the heavy creaking steps, low cries, laughter, muttering voices, that came from various parts of the house. It struck me as even worse than it ever had before. Then she whispered,

"Let's go now."

Outside she seemed a little faint. Because it was such a muggy night, we went out to the end of a dock. And out there on the shadowy river, with the big bridge overhead, the slap of little waves beneath, lights white and red and green on tugs and barges moving by, we said nothing for awhile.

"This is better," ventured Steve.

"Yes," she murmured. "Wonderful." Then her voice was sharp and clear. "But how soon are those perfectly rotten old tenement buildings to be torn down?"

Again silence.

"I don't know," said Steve.

"And how soon is something really big to be done," she demanded, "about the poor?"

Steve slowly turned and looked at her.

"Nothing really big will ever be done. It'll be a slow tiresome job," he said, "a long string of little things—clean-up jobs, like this of mine."

"But you're soon going to leave all this!"

"How am I?"

"You're going uptown!"

"Yes, but——"

"Larry, too," she interrupted. "That's just it! I'm not blaming you both—I'd do the same—because I'm like you—I can get away! That's just the awful part of it!"

"Awful?"

"Oh, I mean unfair! Take those little socialists that Larry showed me in the café. They really mean to change all this—and not take ages to do it, either—because they are in it and can't get out! But for that very reason their thinking must be so muddled and blind—while you two boys, who really have minds and training, and could do so much—you'll get out of this—because you can!"

Steve started to speak, but she broke in:

"You will! You'll both have your own careers!"

"How about you?" he asked intensely. She gave a sharp little laugh and said,

"Oh I am not worth thinking about—a mere girl from uptown come down for a thrill!"

"Well, now that you've had it, why not look around for a job?"

"What—for instance?" She had him there, and she knew it. This was over twenty years ago, and jobs for women were still few. She pressed her point maliciously: "Join the Salvation Army? Or be a Bible reader? No, thanks!"

"There are other jobs." He was silent then, and I could feel him thinking quickly of other kinds of work down here. Settlement worker, visiting nurse, investigator—it wouldn't do. Nothing like that would appeal to her. "No," he said, "I guess you're right."

"Thank you. I'll go back uptown."

She did not come to our rooms again. The next week I gave Steve eight hundred dollars—proceeds of a necklace she had sold. With this money he saved three lives. When I told her about them, Lucy said, "I'm glad I've got *them* off my neck!" So much for Lucy and Poverty. A few days later I brought him the news that she was engaged to her lawyer friend. So much for Lucy and a career.

Steve and I were a gloomy pair. In glum silence he wound up his work, and I heartily damned the world uptown for having spoiled things for us so. My gloom was deepened by the fact that in spite of those raw eggs and milk I was running a temperature each night.

So the last weeks of our year together dragged on slowly to an end.

CHAPTER V

1.

STEVE finished his work the middle of May. It had been a bleak, heart-sickening job, and he showed the strain—not so much in his tall powerful figure as in his face. He looked mentally fagged. He went home for a rest, and about a week later I followed him. On account of that slight touch of fever, he insisted that I spend at least a month at Seven Pines.

I arrived on a Saturday evening, had a long refreshing sleep, and got up in time to go to church with my aunt and Dorothy. It was good to sit in the family pew, listen to the chirping of birds and the stamping of horses hitched outside, and drowsily dream back into the days when Steve and Lucy and I were small. I caught sight of Steve. He was watching me. And to my little start of surprise that asked, "What the devil are you doing here?"—his smile replied, "I'm the minister's son." And his eyes turned back to his father. That afternoon I went with him for a walk back through the hills, which were lovely and fresh in the late spring. As we tramped along we began to remember various things we had done as boys. But then he spoke of his father, and his expression became grim.

"What's the trouble?" I inquired. "Has he been saving your soul again?"

"Oh, yes, the usual wrestling match. But I expected that—rather liked it, in fact. 'This is home,' I thought as I went to bed. It was good, the first few days, to feel everything so exactly the same. Then I found I was wrong. I've been jogging about in his buggy with him —and although he didn't talk much, the little he said made me ask him more. I tell you, son, this place has changed. The cheery faith and habits of our Puritan fathers are going, busted high as a kite. Your dad's mill town has filled up with Wops and Huns and Pollacks. There are Catholic priests; there are anarchists who get together in saloons and shout all night against the rich. My father started a mission there, but the priests and the Reds between them drove him out. He fell back to the village—but even here, a half dozen families of Wops have started market gardens; and at night along the road, if you were Dad in his parsonage, you'd hear loud voices coming by—foreign voices, laughing, shouting, singing their queer foreign songs—especially Saturday night when they're drunk, and Dad's trying to write his sermon inside. Those chaps are gangs of laborers, building homes for millionaires. For the boom is creeping out from New York, and the old farms are being bought and turned into big estates. There'll soon be a large and very expensive country house on every hill. They're planning to build an Episcopal church.

"And against all this," Steve went on softly, "my father is as bitter as hell. In the past he was a stand-patter. Now he's a rebel—he's lost in the woods—or the wilderness, as he would say. He has only just hinted it to me—but it's queer, this business of father and son. For all the two quite different worlds we have inside each one of us, still there's some queer blood tie that makes me understand him. A word or two, and I get the rest. Thank God for those buggy rides. Things ease up then. We talk of the corps. That's one thing we have left between us—we both like to watch things grow. Oats have no souls for Dad to save, and so he gets on fine with oats—shows 'em his decent human side.

"I wonder what we're coming to. I'm glad the hard old Puritan days are gone for good with their heaven and hell—but if in their place we are to get nothing more inspiring than a rich man's house for heaven and a T. B. slum for hell, I don't know as we've moved a lot. Science is the answer, I guess. There isn't much hope in anything else. Anyhow I'll be glad to get back." He laughed and ended shortly, "I'm a poor philosopher. Be glad to quit thinking and handle a knife."

It was good to see him brighten up when I took him home to supper. My aunt had always been friendly to Steve, but tonight her welcoming smile had something uncommon about it. She was all keyed up, fairly beaming with life; while as for Dorothy, aged fourteen, she was bursting with significance. There were two women visitors from the West, and they seemed to be in the secret, too. All four had the refreshed and satisfied appearance which only a long afternoon of the very liveliest gossip can bring. My aunt's two friends—both of them married, with children grown—were like schoolgirls off on a spree. It was their first trip East in years, and they were making the most of it. The day before, she had taken them on a shopping trip to the city. She keenly enjoyed these trips to New York. In spite of her talk against the place, she loved to see the new fashions, the shops with all their brilliant display, the bustle and sparkle and dash of the town. It was a wonderful city to visit. The only trouble was, she said, that so many Americans *stayed* in New York, and there they brought up children who had no connection with any real life.

"Take Lucy, for example."

At that, with a queer little snort, my cousin Dorothy turned to Steve; and when she saw him stiffen a bit, she fairly wriggled with delight. Her mother was talking placidly on. Lucy was such a dear girl, she declared. This was her real home, and when she was here she at once became so different that you realized the pity of the empty artificial life the girl was leading in New York. It made an orchid of a girl—with no roots in anything. At that, Steve said abruptly,

"Well, she's going to marry now. And when she gets a home of her own——"

"I doubt if she'll ever marry that man," Aunt Amelia interrupted. "He isn't half good enough for her, and I've as good as told her so. She is coming up here the end of the week, and I want you boys to help me keep her here till she knows her own mind. No need to give advice to her. Her home will do the talking."

A little later, Steve rose to go.

"Bring your father to supper tomorrow night," said Aunt Amelia cordially. "It's time we were deciding on plans for Decoration Day."

After Steve had left us, my aunt's two visitors went to bed.

"Now, Larry," she informed me, in a brisk but rather tremulous tone, "I've some news for you. Your sister has broken her engagement."

"What?"

Aunt Amelia nodded her head.

"She was here last week and we had a long talk. She asked my advice and I gave it. Then she went back to New York to decide. And this afternoon she telegraphed, 'You were right. I am coming home'."

Young Dorothy and I grabbed hands and gayly waltzed about the room. She stopped and declared impressively,

"Now we'll marry her off to Steve McCrea!"

"Dorothy," said her mother, "it's high time you were in bed. Lucy will marry nobody whatever."

"Oh, yes, she will, darling," Dorothy drawled; and then with a little squeal she rushed at her mother and hugged her tight.

On the morrow my aunt's two visitors left. In the evening Steve and his father came; and at first the conversation was of Decoration Day, which ever since I could recall had been a great time in our family. Aunt Amelia's husband, whose army surgeon's uniform hung in a tall glass case in the hall, had headed the small procession of Civil War veterans to the graves in the cemetery up the hill. Since his death, my aunt and Mr. McCrea had been the leading spirits in making the arrangements. The old clergyman had been a mere boy in 1861, and to his keen disappointment had not been able to join the army until just at the end. But ever since then, in his somber way, he had been a staunch upholder of the War's traditions here. And now his present bitterness was further deepened by the fact that this annual memory day was being neglected. The few old veterans still alive marched to the graves with their families, but the foreigners who had come in knew little or nothing about the War. Tonight, however, it appeared that a German militia company composed of working men in Dad's mills had offered to join in the parade. Old Mr. McCrea was against it; he was for turning their offer down. But Aunt Amelia disagreed. She spoke of the splendid record the Germans in Wisconsin had made in the war of long ago. Why not welcome their countrymen into the march? What was America, anyway, if not a country that welcomed into its very heart and soul all newcomers from over the seas?

Finally she won her point. She turned the conversation then to Steve and the work he had done in New York—"fine practical Christianity." She went on to link his work with mine. She had been a great reader of Bellamy, Howells. I was following in their footsteps now. From books she jumped to ranches. Her son Ed had already left his uncle and started a hog ranch of his own. My father was helping him to start. She dwelt on Dad's keen liking for self-made young Americans, and on his equally keen dislike for Lucy's young men friends in New York—"young fly-up-the-creeks," she called them—who danced all night and as a result were good for nothing the next day. Aunt Amelia was nearing her climax now, and her voice was taking on the gentle quiet tremulous tone it had when breaking some big news. Lucy was such a dear girl, she declared. She "came out" so when she was here. And she would be here in a few days more. . . . At this point my cousin Dorothy, excitedly rigid in her chair and with her vivid round blue eyes fixed on Steve, said slowly and impressively,

"Not only here but marriageable! She has broken her engagement"

And when at that Steve's big hands left his knees with a startled jerk, she placidly folded her plump arms and winked at her mother and at me.

. . . .

2.

On the eve of Decoration Day, Lucy and Dad came out from town; and together the next morning, with piles of wreaths and flowers, we drove to the small graveyard. Steve was waiting for us. As had been our custom, very little was said at first; an expectant hush hung over the graves. There were several "old families" here, and in buggies or wagons or afoot others were arriving. Remembering what Steve had said, I began to notice newcomers—groups of foreign laborers, their women and children dressed up for a holiday and plainly curious to know what we were waiting for. At first they spoke in loud gay voices; but meeting the frowns and disapproving looks of the old families, they caught the funereal hush of the place. Their children giggled, whispered, squirmed. A "horseless carriage" came puffing up—doubtless from onei of the new estates. This arrival, too, was greeted by frowns from all but Aunt Amelia, who welcomed it with a sunny smile. Then suddenly her face assumed that solemn tender reverent look which had often thrilled me as a boy.

"Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord."

The music of the little band could be heard far down the hill, and as we rose to our feet we caught sight of the small procession winding up the hillside road. Behind the band came a score of old men in faded blue uniforms, bearing a flag. Steve's father led them; and the rear was brought up by the German militia, some fifty husky looking lads with rifles on their shoulders, their good-natured faces grown solemn and stern for the occasion.

When we had come close around a little row of soldiers' graves, Steve's father standing with bared head repeated Lincoln's great address:

"Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the propositon that all men are created equal."

As he went on, I glanced around and caught the look on the face of my aunt. She was standing very straight, her head nodding slightly, and on her lips was a smile that said,

"Yes, it has always been, and is and ever shall be, a country so great and wonderful, that if I am not very careful I shall soon be crying a little, my dears."

The smile was still there when a few minutes later she came forward out of the crowd, and stooping very carefully placed a big wreath of apple blossoms at the head of her husband's grave.

Later, at a sharp guttural order, up went the German rifles firing a salute for the dead. A bugle gently blowing Taps. Figures moving slowly about heaping flowers on the graves. And the ceremony was at an end.

On the drive home young Dorothy placed herself beside me. She wanted to talk of Lucy and Steve.

"Larry," she said, "if you don't help me see this through, I'll never forgive you! I'm all alone! Lucy is thinking of going abroad—and Mother will simply not lift a hand. We've got to get very busy!"

We did. When Steve stopped coming to the house, we arranged parties to lure him there; but we made so little progress that Dorothy fairly ground her teeth. "Nothing I can do or say will induce those two to be left alone!" We went to Aunt Amelia for help. "Mother! What on earth can we do?"

"Do nothing, my dear. It is none of our business."

And knitting very slowly at first but faster and faster as she talked, Aunt Amelia proceeded to make it our business. With deep enjoyment we entered into one of those family councils so dear to the hearts of us all.

"Neither of them," she declared, "is in condition to come to any clear decision on anything."

"Then they're in just the condition to get engaged!" cried Dorothy. Her mother looked at her dryly.

"That's quite precocious in you, my dear. But how do we know they're in love with each other?"

With zest and deliberation we proceeded to analyze them both. Steve, we decided, had every reason against asking Lucy to marry him. Her father was rich and Steve was poor. He still had his way to make. No, not quite—for Bannard, his chief, had taken him on as one of his surgeon assistants uptown. Hundreds of other young doctors probably envied him his chance. How much was he likely to earn the first year? Not over three thousand at the most—very little for Lucy to live on.

"But it would do her good to live on it!" cried Dorothy, almost with a wail. "And besides, she wouldn't have to! She'd still have her allowance—and clothes enough for years and years! And the wedding presents would furnish the house!"

We bent our minds on Lucy now. It would be the best thing in the world for her to marry a chap like Steve McCrea. At home she was far from happy. Aunt Fanny and she simply could not get on. This much was in favor of the match. But on the other hand was the fact that Lucy had just rejected a man who, in spite of being a lawyer, was an undeniably decent sort. She was used to him, she liked him, she might have been happy as his wife. No doubt she was telling herself that now, half angry at having given him up.

"And who knows?" I put in, with the irony of a man who is twenty-one years old and has seen the devil of a lot—"Who knows but what, woman fashion, she's blaming her broken engagement on Steve?"

"In addition to which," cried Dorothy, "she has been invited to go abroad. She has that to decide—and she hates to decide—just hates it!"

We emerged from our council no farther on then when we began, but with the restful feeling which only such confabs can give. We came back to our starting point. It was none of our business. Leave it alone.

The next day I took Lucy and Steve for a walk. I suggested it in the most genial mood, as though promising they could count on me to be the life of the party. But once we were off, I dropped all effort to keep up the talk; and after a few impatient looks cast in my direction, my kid sister, obeying the law of her world which ordained that silence was a crime, began to fill in with small talk; and when this failed, she went on to display a kind sisterly interest in the futures of us both. Mine, however, was soon dropped and our attention was focussed on Steve. What kind of a life did he really want? Would he live uptown or still with me? Who would be his patients? What people did he want for friends? On call at all hours day and night, how could he have any life of his own?

I was more than satisfied. Plainly she was trying to picture herself as a surgeon's wife. Moreover, they were talking now.

"What chances you men have," she said.

"So do you," retorted Steve. "You can do anything you like."

She indignantly denied it. Both Dad and Aunt Fanny held her back.

"They do nothing of the kind," he replied. He had her there, and she dropped the point. Her whole bringing up was the trouble, she said.

"You've had a mighty good bringing up—right here at your Aunt Amelia's," said Steve.

She threw an angry look at him. Next she blamed her boarding school. It had been "too useless for any words."

"All right," he answered doggedly, "but the boarding school was your own idea. Yes, it was—I remember perfectly well how you kept at your aunt till she let you go."

A furious silence followed that, and glancing at Steve with keen relish I saw he was worried under his smile, cursing himself for having been so all-fired blunt with this girl. He was in a hole and could see no escape. I caught a glimpse of Lucy's face. Her anger was gone. She read Steve like a book, and looked not only amused but pleased at his evident uneasiness.

"Well, then," she said gravely, "having been such a perfect fool from start to finish, apparently—what do you think I'd better do?"

He told her that he didn't know. So I came in with suggestions. One after the other she tossed them aside.

"Well, Sis," I said finally, "I see nothing else for you but to marry and settle down." Lucy answered gloomily:

"I can imagine nothing worse."

Then Steve pulled himself together. With a smile that was almost natural he said,

"Look here, Lucy, the thing for you is to spend the whole summer right where you are. Get strong and forget your city nerves. Talk with your aunt and think yourself out."

"I guess you're right," said Lucy. "Yes, I think that's what I'll do."

The next day she announced she was going abroad. At once in wild excitement Dorothy summoned her mother and me to another family council.

"I tell you," she cried angrily, "something simply must be done!"

"But what?" I rejoined. She racked her brains. Her mother serenely darned a sock.

"Your father is coming out tonight," she told me, "and he's bringing a friend—Doctor Bannard." I looked at her sharply:

"You mean Steve's chief?"

"Exactly." I leaned forward:

"And you mean?"

"That's twice you've said 'You mean'," said Aunt Amelia composedly. Young Dorothy was shaking her.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Well," said Aunt Amelia, "Steve seems to me to be suffering from a little too much modesty. And I think it may do him good to hear, from a man whose opinion he respects, what kind of a future he's likely to have and how soon he is likely to have it."

"In other words," cried Dorothy, "how soon he'll be able to marry!"

"What a very subtle child you are," her mother said admiringly.

"Is Dad in this?" I inquired.

"No," said she. "Your father and Doctor Bannard have come to be very good friends, that's all. So he's bringing the doctor out for the night."

The plan worked splendidly. Steve was invited over to dinner; and sitting here by Lucy's side he heard things said about himself that would have encouraged any young man to take half a dozen wives. Old Bannard beamed upon my aunt, who had captivated him at the start, and in response to her questions he enlarged upon his pride in the record Steve had made in New York. He envied Steve his youth, he declared. Jobs so tremendous loomed ahead. People from all over the earth were crowding by millions into our cities. An ominous restlessness was there, which was bound to play the devil unless we went after its cause with a knife. Clean out the sweatshops and the slums, build hospitals, dispensaries, and open parks and playgrounds! My aunt resumed her questions now, and from the answers it appeared that not only was Steve to save the world but to lead an exceedingly wonderful life—with money in plenty, a big position, friends of the most brilliant kind, ideas crackling all about. When Bannard finished, there was no doubt that whoever married Steve would be a mighty lucky girl. And it was all I could do, by a good grip on Dorothy's arm, to keep her from stating that fact aloud. Lucy looked distinctly tense.

"That," said Bannard enviously, "is the chance ahead for this boy and his like—that is, if they're backed as they ought to be."

"They will be," said my father.

Whereupon Aunt Amelia smiled and said we would have our coffee outside.

So we went out under the stars for awhile.

. . . .

3.

Lucy had planned to leave the next day, and Steve came over to say goodbye. I happened to be with her when he abruptly entered the room. I made for the door, but before I got through it I heard him say,

"Look here, why are you going abroad?" Voice quivering but very strong. I went on up the hallway, but through an adjoining room their voices came to me again.

"Yes, you do," he said in a low sharp tone. "Or if you don't, I'm done for. I want you so I can't go on. You care for me, Lucy—yes, you do—look up at me—it means so much! You're unhappy—you want something else! I can give it—I mean I'll try so hard!" His voice became so husky and low I could make nothing of it now. "You are like that," he ended.

"Oh Steve, I'm not! I'm really not! If you only knew me through and through——"

"I do!" he cried. "What do I care for the last few years? I knew you, didn't I, here as a kid—from the time when you were nothing at all! And that's what counts—what makes a girl! You've known me, too, in just that way! And nothing else under the moon and the stars——"

I heard a heavy step outside, and sneaking frantically to the door I reached it just as it was thrown open by Ed, my young cousin, arrived from his ranch, stout and hearty as a bull. He had not seen his home for a year. As he opened his mouth to shout, "Hello!"—I stopped him by a terrible contortion of my features. Ed shrank back, then grabbed my hand.

"What the hell's the matter?" he whispered.

"Sh-h!"

"Mother sick?"

I gripped his arm, and tip-toeing like a Wild Indian I got him down into the yard. Briefly I explained to him. And because, though he was slow in speech Ed was a fellow quick to act, he conducted me to the living-room window and boosted me up for a look inside. In an instant I dropped to the ground. Around the house we hurried and up to Aunt Amelia's room, and a scene of the most frenzied kind took place in the next few moments there. Ed's coming was a complete surprise; and no sooner had his mother begun to take in the astonishing fact that her beloved son was home, than into the tumult I lightly tossed the news from below. Joy redoubled. Prancing 'round like a young goat, Dorothy turned abruptlly, rushed out and down the stairs to explore; and presently there came to our ears from the piano, sweet and low, the stately Lohengrin Wedding March.

The rest of the day I recall as a bedlam of laughter, kisses, wedding plans, ranches, hogs and white tulle over satin. My aunt was getting Ed in one ear and Lucy and Steve in the other. I remember Dorothy throwing the gowns joyously out of Lucy's trunks, to the tune of "Oh That Golden Wedding!" The wedding was to be right here. That much was decided at the start. The talk ran on far into the future, into a jumble of plans and dreams—till Aunt Amelia brought us back.

"Steve," she said, "I think you had better go to see Lucy's father tonight." Steve sobered quickly:

"I'd thought of that. I'm going to town this afternoon."

"He'll be perfectly radiant!" Dorothy cried. Her mother smiled a bit queerly and said,

"He will be eventually, my dear."

I went with Steve that afternoon. In the city I left him to his fate, but meeting him later that evening I learned about his interview.

My father, it seemed, had sharply changed from the most genial friendliness to dumbfounded indignation over the outrageous news that Steve wanted Lucy for a wife. The idea had never entered Dad's head. And his love for Lucy, his deep dislike of changes in his household, his dread of how Aunt Fanny would take it, all combined to bring on an explosion that pretty nearly sent Steve away in a volcanic state of mind. It was Aunt Fanny who saved the day. Hearing the voices, she came in; and on learning the news, she declared herself at once in favor of the match. Engrossed as she was in her newborn babe and her two other children; and after a long confinement pleased to be once more beginning the luxurious life she loved, it was hard to make Aunt Fanny feel that any event was a tragedy—least of all one that involved setting her smooth household free from its sole disturbing element. She had honestly tried her best to make Lucy happy. She had failed. So she gladly gave Steve her blessing and advised Dad to do the same. Then Steve, who was still on his high horse, said that he wanted it understood that if he married Lucy they would live on his earnings from the start. Snort from my father. Frown from Steve, who insisted that Bannard be called in—"to give you the facts as to whether or not I'll be able to support a wife." This was done. And old Bannard was so strong and convincing in his backing, that as soon as he left the house my father gripped Steve by the hand.

"All right, my boy—I talked like a fool. And I like the way you took it."

Well over his astonishment, the more Dad thought about the match the better he liked it. Thank Heaven the girl had shown the sense to steer clear of her titty-tatty friends and pick for a husband a real young man. He told her so when she came the next day; and to his surprise this grown daughter of his, who had always been far from demonstrative, suddenly threw herself into his arms and wept on his shoulder.

"Oh Dad, Dad—it means so much—so much to have you feel like that!"

Even with her stepmother Lucy got on famously now, for the two were bound together by the weird conviction that, no matter how many hundred thousand articles of clothing a girl has in her wardrobe, she must begin shopping all over again if she is to become a wife. So they bought clothes; and after that they set about furnishing a house, a small one down near Washington Square, which Lucy and Steve had selected after looking at scores of apartments.

Steve was back in the city and working hard. They were to be married the end of August. Only one week for a wedding trip, for that was all they could afford—and Lucy, when not buying things, was firmly enthused at the prospect of being "poor," of living downtown, with a mere box of a house for a home, and only a cook and one other maid. Everything goes by comparison. She could talk like that in our father's house; but with Steve and me in our old rooms, when the Lung Block on those stifling nights like some enormous creature alive would glare out of a thousand eyes, belch heat and stinking odors, and in a raucous quivering roar would declare—"I am Poverty. I am the fiery furnace of all the ages. I am Hell"—then would my young sister vow that it seemed perfectly criminal for Steve and herself to have so much. Recalling Bannard's dream for the city, she would demand the full details of how it was to be worked out. Hospitals, settlements, public schools—she was eager to learn of them all—parts of a world in which she was sure that Steve would play a tremendous role. But her sense of humor and his own would soon come to the rescue; and dropping all thought of science or the salvation of mankind, they would go off on radiant sprees.

They came out often to Seven Pines to talk it over with our aunt. But here Steve's silent father was sometimes a disturbing note; for although he said nothing openly, it was plain that he saw complications ahead. From him and his forefathers, figures reaching back into the hard and bleak and rugged beginnings of New England, Steve had inherited a contempt for any fellow weak enough to become a rich girl's husband. Newspaper stories had already appeared about the engagement, and it got on his nerves at times. In New York he could meet it by hard work and the determination to make such a thundering success that all thought of money would go by the board. But here in the country with his father he was not so confident. They had trouble, too, as to his religion; for before old Mr. McCrea would consent to marry them, he had to be shown that his son had retained enough of his faith to justify the church in sanctioning the union. And this was not easy. It took all Aunt Amelia's powers of persuasion. Finally it was arranged.

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4.

As the wedding day drew near, this old house at Seven Pines took on a thrilled expectant air. For Aunt Amelia, a bit blue because all of us but Dorothy were now grown up with lives of our own, had set herself determinedly to make us feel that this was the one spot on earth where each of us would want to come back with our joys or our troubles. This was home. Rapidly it began to fill with bridesmaids, friends and relatives. Gifts were arriving. Plans were made. The house was a perfect hubbub now, fairly bursting with guests. Dorothy was in a state of bliss quite impossible to describe. Outdoors and within, by day and by night, the great exciting time went on. Even the homely little church had been given a bright festive air.

On the wedding day, as Steve's best man, I reached the church before anyone else, except his father and himself. Both of them were on their knees. With his hand on the shoulder of his son, the old preacher's face was turned upward, his eyes were closed and the voice of his prayer so husky and low I could not hear.

Of the wedding service I have no clear recollection. It is but a blur in my memory.

"To love and to cherish, till death us do part." I remember the hushed expectancy in the church on that lovely summer's day. It was as though for the moment brought under the spell of those marriage vows to be binding on the years ahead, our senses, too, though we knew it not, were turned toward the future. How deeply shocked we would have been had we been told of the great winds which with the roar of a tempest world-wide were to beat upon all churches, homes and courts of law, banks and seats of government, and challenge each to show good reason why it should not be struck down, swept into the raging flood and left to founder in the past. "For richer, for poorer." In those days there was such wealth on the one hand, such poverty on the other, that the hope of winning the one and of escaping the other crept up to the very altar like a god invisible. But with the children's children of those unions how will it be? Life is simplified for a man who is blind. For me at least the war overseas, abruptly as a thunderbolt, has cut off the past from the future. I am between, and I am in the dark. I look ahead, and it seems to me that even now there begins to appear in mighty outlines, vague and dim, the world of these children and their sons. Great wealth and poverty are not there. What then? A perfect brotherhood? Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, all in mellow glow? Far from it. Rather the hard clear light of early dawn, and climbers up a mountain side—builders, workers, seekers, dreamers—meeting the old obstacles, Greed, Envy, Sloth and many more—rocks in the path to the perfect day. "For better, for worse." How can we be sure? But it is the dawn, not the dark, that I feel.

"I pronounce you man and wife."

Abruptly the spell was broken, and soon back at home to the music of a little orchestra we were crowding around the bride and groom—a laughing, chattering, joyous mob. Did we dance later? I am not sure. But when Steve and Lucy had gone upstairs, I remember that I led the singing—song after song—till the walls and the low ceilings rang. Then down the stairs with a rush they came. Shouts, rice in showers and old shoes, and a carriage rolling down the hill, Lucy's hand from the window waving goodbyes.

In the twenty years that have gone since then, there have been other happenings here—both dark and bright. We shall come to them. But tonight the house is very still. And this house and I have grown to be such intimate companions, that in these silent times it seems as though we were dreaming not apart but together into the past and on into the years ahead, in which there will be other festivals, matings, births, long solemn talks, bright visions, plans and resolutions. Of this much we can be sure. For the rest, the light is still too dim. But though the world be strange and new, the house is old. So is the race. Some elements will never change. May the happiness be deeper, the tragedies more wide apart.

CHAPTER VI

1.

STEVE AND LUCY asked me to live with them. I declined but was there continually, for not only was I fond of them both, but deeply curious as well. In what happened to them I could get premonitions of what might befall my precious self should I ever take the plunge. It was an engrossing spectacle. Single—married—presto—change! In a twinkling Steve's personal life was seized and bent and twisted, complicated, crowded up in the most delightful, torturing and fascinating manner. "And they lived happy ever after." Ha, ha, ha! The laughter of the ages here! For happiness, it now appeared, could be a thing of fever, shivers, dazzling light and utter darkness, flare-ups over smallest trifles, brooding thoughts and fancies hatching, anxious searching, sudden finding, celebrations, hoping, dreaming, babies crying.

The queer little brown house—two floors and a half, with white frames to its long narrow windows, quaint low doorway leading in—was fairly quivering with new life. Shocks, large and small, came in rapid succession. A shock at the start for them to find how little they really knew one another. Suddenly they were intimate strangers who looked at each other with startled eyes. Steve had his anxious moments. Of what they were going through Lucy had known little or nothing. She was what is called a well bred girl, full of susceptibilities—some to be expected, others to bring a man up with a jerk. It took careful steering. But luckily Steve had intuitions far from common in our sex. He took her through without disaster. And as a result, instead of a somewhat bruised and dulled or secretly disillusioned young wife, he had a radiant creature. She had never been quite beautiful, but now she came into her own. Her large gray eyes had a shimmering light that she would turn upon old Steve; and when at such times the whole soul of him grew queerly tense, she would laugh or smile, talk rapidly and move about doing foolish things or making him do them. All the furniture in the place was tried here and there and then again here—while I helped, advised and criticized, or stirred the Rarebit for our feast and meditated on married life.

So far, so good. But now they went exploring deep, each one into the love of the other. Neither had any patience with shams or concealments. The veils were down. All thoughts and feelings, points of view, not in order but haphazard, were eagerly turned inside out. There were arguments growing decidedly heated, quarrels comic, quarrels grim. He was working hard and she urged him on; but there came sudden jealous moods. "That detestable Bannard!" she would cry. "Can't he give us a moment of our own?" After the flare-ups or spells of gloom came reconciliations so dazzling that I felt in the way; and forth I went into the world, a lonely, wistful, lorn young man. But again there were drops to the commonplace, when they had little to say to each other. And I was a welcome figure then, for my young sister was resolved that marriage should not narrow them. She wanted all the very latest gossip from Newspaper Row; and she loved to sit up half the night planning what we meant to do in the years so brightly opening. In mind and fancy, in those days, I had exuberance enough; but in our ardent long discussions it added an agreeable zest to feel about me the love of these two. It was always there just under the surface, so intense, so warm and deep, so human in its weaknesses, its gropings and its twists and turns, its way of suddenly bursting up, rending, tearing, quickly healing, deepening and reaching out—an uncanny and mysterious force in these people I had known so well.

I saw more of Lucy than of Steve. Often I found her alone in the evenings, and this delightful sister of mine attracted me enormously. With her small house she had fallen in love. As a writer will carry a story about with him in the back of his mind, so did Lucy with her home; and out of her consciousness she evolved a constant stream of new ideas, until under her touch the little place assumed a warm living personal charm. The daily routine of its life had been arranged to run smoothly now. That is, it should have. It did not. Like some mysterious engine, it would at times "kick back" or "stall." But these accidents, in Lucy's mood, were only things to laugh at. So were the struggles month by month firmly to keep expenses down. Each morning she went with a basket to a large market not far off, where a squeaky little orchestra of musicians from the street gave music to the marketing; and going about to the various booths she handled with an authoritative manner meat and fish and vegetables, and chatted with the people who sold them. Many she vowed to be "characters." I wrote them up, they read my sketches, and the popularity of my sister was increased—for I painted them all in high colors, just as we saw them in those days, a thoroughly human, likable lot.

On the edge of the tenement quarter just below her neighborhood, she discovered a small Italian church, and took me there on a festival night when the little place was all aglow with tinsel and soft candle light. A Sicilian wine shop was close by, with huge foreign looking casks of wine—from California; and upstairs was a puppet show—or "marionettes," as they were called. The white-headed old showman became our friend and let us in behind the scenes. Back of one wing we stood with him. Close above, from a dark little loft, two gorgeous youths stripped to the waists would glare at one another as with wires they worked the heads and limbs, the swords and shields of the doughty warriors fighting below. Kings and queens, knights, lovely maids—the old showman himself had made them all. Standing beside us, his big black eyes fixed upon their antics, in a voice of deep resonance he would roll off the rhythmic lines. The play was hundreds of acts in length, it took three months to play it through—and yet for the male characters he knew all the lines by heart, and would sing them off sonorously; while over in the other wing his stout old wife, who seemed to be drowsing over a large and ancient book, would somehow always waken in time to read each fine lady's part. And across the crude gas footlights, peering into the darkness there, we could see lines of swarthy faces, hungry fascinated eyes.

Romance, glamour, mystery. To one who has the eyes to see, the turgid city of New York becomes a glamorous treasure house. Greeks, Turks, Armenians are there—and an Arabic daily paper! Spaniards, South Americans, Hungarians, Bohemians, Chinamen, Hindoos, Russians and Jews from all over the face of the globe. And they have their newspapers and cafés, shops piled up with curios, churches, temples, synagogues, mosques. There are whispering magicians there—secret rages, endless crimes, unspeakable vices—dances, songs—there are theatres—weddings—babies born. And a kind of a roar sweeps over it all.

And in those days it seemed as though all that touched on my sister's life revealed a romance of its own. Even the furnace did its part. Now a furnace is not a romantic thing. Yet the furnace man I found for her was a tall Russian with close-shaved head who wore an old gray belted blouse with a flower embroidered on each shoulder. A village school teacher over there, he had left home and started out upon a world-wide pilgrimage to gather the teachers of the earth into one great brotherhood. His name was Oberookoff. He barely spoke English and knew still less about furnace drafts. He had terrible times—he had marvelous dreams. One morning when the house was freezing, Steve found him sprawled on the cellar floor trying to read by candle light the paper with which an hour before he had come down to start the fire. . . . I saw much of him later on.

It was a cheerful neighborhood, with little wretchedness to be seen. On balmy evenings groups of boys and girls would come by singing. Among the low old-fashioned dwellings several big tenement buildings had already been put up. One of them reared its shadowy bulk just behind Lucy's little house; and from her bedroom window she could hear voices drop out of the dark —angry, peevish, laughing, low; they seemed to go on all through the night, in a babel of many tongues. Across her backyard was a low brick house—an affair as dull as the furnace, it seemed. Yet a notorious "fence" was there. A "fence," ladies and gentlemen, is a man who trades in stolen goods. When Lucy learned this she was filled with disgust; for a whole barrel of wedding gifts that she detested, yet must keep, because the donors at any moment might come spying about the house, had been left on the back porch one night. Why couldn't her neighbor have helped her out?

Steve's doctor's sign was in the window. Occasionally a possible patient would come up and ring the bell. And at such times, if Steve were out his wife would receive the visitor, cordial, friendly, sympathetic, and would beg him to call again.

Both Steve and I brought our friends to the house. With a few exceptions they belonged to the world old Bannard had described; and while they did not quite come up to the picture he had painted, they were interesting nevertheless. For the age of my youth was an era when hundreds of young Americans, like the youth in far away Russia, began a movement "to the people." Some of them lived in "settlements;" others took tenements of their own. Of the Russian Intelligenzia I learned a good deal later on—so much that I would have been astounded had I been told what I should see. But the movement here was different. Little or nothing very wild or world-embracing in its scope. Not revolution but reform. A practical, hardworking lot, though you would not have guessed it to hear them talk. Bernard Shaw was then the rage, and they would talk Shaw by the hour at night. To listen, you might have fancied that each and every one of them had nothing but scorn for small reforms. What a absurdly rotten old world! Get a grip on the roots of it, jerk and heave, and bring it down with a glorious crash! But the next morning back they would go to the steady jobs which their practical souls loved above all things else on earth.

So the country began to be saved in those days. From those few hundred pioneers have sprung thousands of wild young things to whose godlike spirits the world is a ball spinning 'round so fast that only the boldest thoughts and acts can be seen or heard in the seething whirl. Meanwhile, as in the age of my youth, from far beneath them can be felt a prodigious heave and quiver, as from a mass of humanity dull and common as the earth, and as unlikely to burst up. And yet earthquakes are not unknown.

But if we had any such thoughts, they only added zest to our talk. And Lucy, keenly interested, was a delightful hostess. Aunt Amelia often came in from the country to spend the night, and she warmly approved of everything —of the house, the change in Lucy, her new life and her new friends. It was fine to see young people working for the good of the country in such useful practical ways. Sometimes she brought Dorothy, too, who was soon to go to college and was thrilled at meeting here such entrancing persons as magazine writers and suffragettes, and above all women who earned their own living.

"That's what I mean to do!" she declared. She was working hard at her piano and had dreams of a career.

But more often her mother came alone; and because our aunt was interested far less in jobs than in people themselves—whom she loved to study until she knew them, not as they would like to appear but as they really were underneath—having approved, she set herself to watch them with a keen delight, their vanities and weaknesses, quirks and twists of every kind. And when they had gone she and Lucy would talk them over for hours. Lucy had so much to tell her aunt. She was changing much more deeply now. There came long times when she kept to herself. As the spring drew rapidly on, there were fewer visitors at the house. Aunt Amelia came more and more. She was there when Lucy's son was born.

Abruptly then the atmosphere changed. Dad and Aunt Fanny came to the house, and many of Lucy's old girl friends. Some were already wives and mothers. Small dainty garments and other gifts poured in from uptown. It was as though the old life of my sister were reaching out for her once more.

As soon as she was strong enough, she came out with her baby to Seven Pines.

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2.

She spent a long quiet summer here, and under the leisurely routine her sense of proportions began to change. She was ill for a time and that colored her thinking, made her crave familiar things. In rambling talks with Aunt Amelia—to whom the word "family" meant so much; and to whom, for all her love of new things, it was "such a mistake" to drop the old—Lucy's formless cravings began to assume a definite form. She was deeply pleased by the fact that Dad, when he came to his mills nearby, would almost invariably motor over to see his little grandson. Her love for him came back tenfold. The boy made such a difference. The winter before, in Lucy's home, our father and Aunt Fanny had been almost wholly ignored; but when she returned to town in October, Lucy was anxious to have him come, especially without his wife. And out of this anxiety there gradually developed a complicated tangle, a fast deepening conflict. It was the old, old struggle between two women for a man—but it had a queer new twist to it. Aunt Fanny wanted a husband; Lucy, a grandfather for her boy.

Aunt Fanny, still in her early thirties, had now decided apparently that three children were enough, and was making preparations for an exceedingly gorgeous career. She was prettier than ever before, and if anything more smartly dressed. It was a constant marvel to me to see what satin, silk and velvet and—oh damn it, just plain cloth!—could do to a woman. One night I humbly begged her to give me some small inkling of the mysteries of it all. And after stating emphatically that most men writers made a perfectly ludicrous failure of dressing the women in their books, gracious she took me upstairs and showed me large closets filled with gowns, and one with hats and another with slippers, shimmering upon long shelves and twinkling mischievously down. She talked of clothes. She opened a safe and gave a little lecture on jewels. To be "over-dressed" was the thing she abhorred. A quiet expensive English maid looked on discreetly, smiling, and added a little sage advice. In brief, my young mother did her best to help me on in my writer's career—and as usual flirted with me a bit.

As for Dad, she could twist him around her finger. In his tense busy crowded life, his wife was a tonic, a draught of wine. Though fifty now, he was still young —still one of "the big new men" downtown. His imagination, vital force and will were turned on vistas extending out all over the land, and he was making money so fast it was all Aunt Fanny could do to keep up. But she did pretty well. Already she had coaxed him out of his plan for a house on the Sound; they were building at Newport instead. And here in town she entertained more lavishly than ever before. Her dinners, dances, musicales were, like her clothes, expensively simple, in the very best of taste. It is true that among her guests were men who only a little before had been running factories, mills and mines in distant parts of the country. But they had become New Yorkers now. Their wives had taken them firmly in hand and had polished rough, rough diamonds into such nicely finished gems that nothing remained of the past but a smile—with a hard shrewd wisdom underneath. There were distinguished foreigners come overseas in quest of graft, who met such men in homes like these and sized them up as easy marks; then met them in their offices—and emerged with scared faces like bad little boys.

Under Aunt Fanny's skillful hand my father, too, had taken on a decidedly polished air. He grew younger and younger. He learned to dance! And to Lucy this dancing was the last straw. Disgusting and ridiculous! The way that creature twisted him! The waste of money, the useless waste, the utterly empty senseless life—*for a grandfather!* There was the rub. She wanted Dad not young but old—plain, simple, kindly, old fashioned in dress. "At his age" she was constantly saying. At his age he should have what he really craved, a home like Aunt Amelia's. At his age he should be thinking not only of gathering money in but of spending it for the common good—to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick—in short, back Steve. What perfectly dazzling chances to make the whole world happy, these days—and what a perfectly wicked shame that money which should have been spent on such work was merely "thrown about like air."

Dad met this point by good-naturedly contributing to everything for which Lucy asked his aid. But the outrageous part of it was that he was making money so fast he could meet both his wife's and his daughter's demands. He went farther—he even offered to build a hospital for Steve. But here the complications grew. For Steve declined the offer; and when Lucy asked me to talk with him, it was revealed that Steve still felt his silent old father's contempt for his position as a rich girl's husband. He was resolved more than ever before to keep free of his father-in-law.

"Look here, Larry," he said, "I love my wife and I want to take this—but I can't. If I choose this very easy way and go up as the son-in-law of your father, it would take all the ginger out of me—I am like that. She would feel it soon—it would half spoil our lives. And why should I? I don't need to! I've got chances enough as it is! So many, it's bewildering! And if Lucy will only wait awhile—God knows we're happy enough even now—or were, till she got this fool idea. I don't understand it!"

"It's the boy."

"The boy," Steve answered doggedly, "is to be my son—and not the grandson of Carrington Hart!"

The effect of this on Steve was to make him work the harder, and to feel a bitter impatience at times over the fact that Bannard, his chief, in order to put through his plans must forever "toady" to men of wealth. This feeling in Steve did not last, but while it did it was intense. He had a big generous streak in him; and grumble as he often did against the obstinate ignorance of people in the tenements, he paid many free visits to tenement homes, in the meantime working hard on various committees. He so devotedly threw himself into the hard slow realization of Bannard's big dreams, that even when he refused to attempt to get large subscriptions out of Dad, his chief could not find fault with him. Old Bannard begged the money and Steve slaved to make it count. Through the dark tides of people in the evening hours surging through the tenement streets, he moved with a grim deep satisfaction.

"An honest-to-God job," he called it. "And if we had a real government instead of a lot of bum politicians, chaps like me would be salaried so that we could give all our time to such work—without begging help from the millionaires."

As it was, he had his own living to earn, and as Bannard's assistant he was constantly paying visits to people uptown. He was soon in great demand—especially among the women—to his annoyance and chagrin. I remember one night when he came home looking like a thundercloud; and after much questioning I learned that a certain dazzling songstress, who was cheering the older years of one of Bannard's patients, had suddenly required an operation which Steve performed—but her nerves were still in such a state that she had somehow inveigled him into standing behind a wing at Weber and Fields' music hall while she went on to do her turn. "I'm strong while you are here!" she had whispered. Confound the little idiot, he would never go to *her* again! But in spite of his growls his practice grew.

"Any amount of these women," he said, "are human enough when they get the chance. But most of them don't need me. If they would only quit milking men and go to milking cows instead, half their ills would soon be cured, and fellows like me would have the time for the real jobs waiting all over town. . . . But I need the money," he ended.

At home the bills were piling up. It was astounding, the extra expense involved in rearing Tommy, their boy. When Steve increased the monthly allowance, Lucy quickly discovered more things that were essential. As a rule, she could keep such items from coming to his attention; and when he did take notice and angrily protested, in the same tone she would rejoin that so long as she had her own money she could see no earthly reason for not spending it on her own child. For the old complication was there. How could she help noticing all that Aunt Fanny's children had? They had two really able nurses—not mere ignorant chits of girls—and a governess, a coachman and a small coupé painted orange and blue. There were special teachers for Louise, and there were such adorable clothes, and dolls and countless toys and games in that love of a nursery. They had the best of everything! While as for Tommy, the poor little lamb, cooped up in this small box downtown, with no friends, no playground, teachers—oh! With a swift compression of her lips, his mother would then sally forth and buy something for him.

She started a process that she descried as "getting things in proportion again." This involved lunches, shopping sprees, and the going to concerts and to plays, with various former friends of hers. She began to require "clothes fit to be seen in"—both on the street and at home in the evenings. For now a few choice spirits were asked with their husbands down to dine. And snarl and grumble though he would, Steve had to "doll himself up" on such nights.

"What I want and what I mean to have," she confided to me, "is friends of *all* kinds, to broaden us out. I'm not going to let him get into a rut—I don't care how big a rut it is!" And she went on to say ominous things about getting sooner or later "a background for my children." Now a background may be anything, but it sounded large to me that night.

For the present, however, she was content to live as they were—with the slight changes already described. And though there were still, between them, frequent flares and discords, the reconciliations were quite as happy as before. Steve and I still brought our friends. There was no discouragement, no gloom. There was impatience, pettiness, and jealousy, but beneath it all was the sense of growth, expectancy, the feeling of deep, boundless youth.

There was the added joy in the child. Young Tommy had now grown to be a rather enormous urchin. At the age of five he required the clothes of a boy of seven. His voice was almost deep as mine, and his large brown reflective eyes would meet my own and suddenly gleam with the secrets shared between us. In the summer up at Seven Pines I had, with a dark mystery conveyed by winks and warning gestures, guided him to the secret places I had known there as a boy—and many I had never known; and he had shown me some of his own, including a great rose bush where he had seen fairy lanterns one night. In New York our most wonderful secret place was at the circus, where through a press agent I knew we had been able to penetrate far back into those regions where clowns and acrobats, giants, dwarfs and elephants dress for the ring. A weasened little old cowboy there had winked at Tommy and whistled in a most peculiar way. This whistle we had learned with care, and it became our very own. We developed it into a system of signals. Often when I came to the house after Tommy had gone to bed, I would sneak out in the backyard and whistle; and from his room in reply would come two short whistles that announced, "It's no use. Annie is in the next room"—or else a long one and a short, which meant, "She's not here! Come on up with the stuff!" By "the stuff" we meant invariably two enormous gumdrops, which we devoured in the dark. While I sat on his bed he would at moments grasp my hand and squeeze it hard.

And there were times when I envied Steve and vaguely resolved to get me a wife.

CHAPTER VII

1.

But this proved to be no simple affair. Not from any lack of girls, for in the great city of New York were perfect swarms of eager maids who would have tripped themselves up in their haste to get to the altar by my side. At least so I liked to remark to my sister—for it always got a rise. When she tried to wither my conceit, I would patiently cite to her case after case in my own life and those of my friends. No credit to us, I argued, we were all mere average men; but even an average man, it seemed, was so devilish attractive to girls that—well, just to give one example of many, once on a lovely summer's night I had had to jump out of a buggy and run. And if Lucy had not stopped my story with an unbelieving snort, I might have told her a lot of things. The only point that worried me was the danger to my precious self. I was a mighty happy young man. I had already begun to write plays; and for a future dramatist to go and tie himself up ahead to a wife, a home and babies, was unimaginative to say the least. So I remained a bachelor. I still lived in my old rooms downtown; it would have been hard to give them up. I was free as the winds. There were week-end visits close to the city and journeys far out to the West, where several ranches knew me well; and there was a wild little mining town out in Colorado, to which my paper had sent me at the time of a big strike.

In New York and careering about the land I was getting large sweeping radical views. The work and lives of the people gathered around Lucy and Steve had lost their hold. They were mere reformers. I was out for larger vistas, bolder thinking, deeper plans. Rapidly I made my way into the radical circles among the foreigners in New York who proclaimed the Great Revolution. I delighted in bringing such people like bombs into my sister's quiet home and exploding them there among the reformers. The Russian furnace man and I had become the best of friends. I took him out to supper at times. His plan for a world-wide brotherhood of teachers was a big idea. And the fact, as pointed out by Steve, that the only thing Oberookoff had done toward realizing his great dream was to make friends with the German janitor of a public school nearby, only drew from me the retort that I thanked God this Russian chap was not as practical as ourselves. We Yankees were always doing things! Wait a minute! Dream a few dreams!

Through him I met a heroic old woman who from the time when she was a girl had worked for the freedom of Russia. Twenty-seven years she had spent in prisons and Siberia. She was to me then, as she is still, one of the few great people it has been my luck to know—and one of the most lovable. When I brought her to Lucy's home, she plumped down on the floor with the children and played with them to her heart's content. She made such a hit not only with Lucy but even with Steve and later with Dad, that the latter gave her a large contribution—which went, as I learned later on, into assassination expenses. The Grand Duke Sergius—killed by a bomb—at Dad's expense! I relished the thought.

Later I interested myself in a troop of Russian players who gave some very wonderful performances in Russian of Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy. I remember vividly the night when they did Gorky's "Night Lodging." The sheer grip and force of the piece, in its sombre Rembrandt setting, left me breathless. How could I hope to write like that? They let me in at rehearsals; and watching, I made up my mind to learn Russian and go over there. The leading man of the company became a kind of god of mine. I remember one night in a little café down in the heart of the Ghetto, this Russian, very drunk at the time, reciting a thing by Pushkin describing some hens in their safe little yard cackling maliciously up at an eagle sailing high in the heavens before a lowering storm. But the eagle from on high answered them disdainfully. Let hens and their like stick to their yards. For him the great heavens, the storms and the winds! The chap was the eagle himself that night. And listening I vowed that I would keep out of the hen yards of this life.

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2.

I wrote a play, a labor play, and filled it with a seething concoction of my new ideas. My setting was the Colorado mining town where I had been. The miners were a mixture of foreigners and native born. A good deal has been said of late of how all radical doctrines are imported from abroad—but it was all here long ago. In this particular mining town rebellion was a home-made brew. Instead of "the hated bourgeois" and "the bloated capitalist," they used the term "the God-damned-boss;" and in place of the Great Revolution, they confined their thoughts to strikes—but these were often such affairs as would have aroused the admiration of the wildest Bolshevik, while the methods of the employers would have brought an approving smile from any chief of police of the Czar. The employers bought and owned the legislature, judges, courts, the sheriffs and militia. The strikers studied the fine art of the manufacture and hurling of bombs; they stored up rifles, shotguns, machine guns, powder and plenty of lead—then seized locomotives and rode about, spreading rebellion through the State. They blew things up, they fought pitched battles, held whole towns against the troops. And all this was directed by native born Americans.

I talked with one leader, Mat Welles by name, a lean man of thirty, rather small, with a slow gentle drawling voice. One of his uncles, years before, had died in a fight on the Border, and another had been sent to jail for having killed five hundred sheep. Being a cattle man himself, he had looked upon the invading sheep as so many Bolsheviki; and so he had deported them over a cliff on a pitch dark night, and had then sat down and lit his pipe and listened to the noise below. The nephew knew little and cared less for Karl Marx or Bakunin, but he took a keg of T. N. T. and an old clock and a slow fuse and made a kind of little toy boat, which he put into a water sluice far up on a rocky mountain side. This sluice, which was covered, led two thousand yards down into the stockaded plant of a mine owner known as "Zink-Eye Brown." And Mat, like his uncle, lit his pipe and listened to the noise below. He had also invented a fluid which was called "Greek fire." You sprinkled a few drops on a "scab," then crossed the street and watched him burn.

In brief, there was material here for a play with a good deal of action. But like most beginners I filled it with talk. The radical views of these low-voiced Reds, couched in vivid and picturesque phrase, were irresistible to my pen. And then, because the mine owner was a distant cousin of ours, I crowded in his views as well. His mine was no worse than the others—in fact, rather better—for he had employed a German chemical engineer thoroughly to examine it and recommend means of fighting certain poisonous gases there. This engineer, whose name was Sonfeldt, had already spent several years in American mills and mines. He was still a good deal of a youngster, a decent sort with friendly eyes, though rather precise and pompous at times and blind to any idea but his own. His own idea, which had already put tense lines in his thin dark sensitive face, was to the effect that for a nation rich as ours to allow its mines and factories to kill or maim or poison over half a million people a year, was a disgrace to its government. Whereupon I confided my plan of arousing the nation by my play. He eagerly caught at the idea and gave me startling figures and lurid incidents to put in. But when the play was written and he had read it carefully through, he was aghast at what we had done. I had a good title, "Underground." But now with a groan Sonfeldt exclaimed,

"Ach—Gott! The whole play is underground—the propaganda has buried it deep! You must so arrange that the propaganda will stay beneath and be not seen—and the story and action strongly go!"

Long after I had come back East, I slaved like a dog on that child of my brain. At last it was done. I took it to a manager, who read it and informed me that there were two subjects under the sun which could never make a cent on the stage. One was the Labor Movement and the other Jesus Christ. "Leave 'em alone," he advised me. Two other managers turned me down. In disgust I gave the play to an agent and came out to Seven Pines for my summer's vacation. But here, some two weeks later, I was summoned one night by a boy in a buggy to come to the "general store" in the village, where was a long distance 'phone. And there I learned from my agent that a certain manager wanted my piece on the following terms. As he named them, I said, "Yes"—"Fine"—"I agree"—in a state of mounting excitement. With Dorothy and her mother I had a big celebration that night.

"Seriously!" cried Dorothy. "Wouldn't it be too wonderful—if you become a dramatist and I can reach the concert stage! Oh dear, if only I weren't so *old!*"

"Eighteen?" I smiled.

"Yes, eighteen—and most musicians have arrived by that time! While I am simply nowhere! Oh mother, why must I go to college this fall?"

"Because," said her mother, "you're only a child—and before you attempt the piano in earnest I want you really to know your own mind."

Then they turned again to my play and praised it to my heart's content.

"Read it to us!" Dorothy begged. And we were at it half the night.

I threw up my job on the paper and gave my whole time to revising the play. In New York, at my manager's office nobody had any time for me; they had a whole string of plays to put on, and mine must wait. But when its turn did come, in the fall, the whole office in a twinkling centered its attention here. In a fine frenzy the piece was cast and put in rehearsal. In charge was a kind of a panther man, lithe, wiry—he moved on springs. He had a thin sardonic face and eyes that looked as though all the thrills of the world had scorched them long ago. Hughey Gore knew little of Colorado mines, but a lot about giving a piece "the punch." For the careful facts and figures of my friend from Germany, he showed not the slightest respect. Out they went or around they were twisted.

"Who'll know the difference?" he asked. "Say—what is this, anyhow—a piece or a sermon? Put it across!"

He ruled supreme. I had signed away my power to oppose him. Moreover, the players, who rehearsed for over a month without any pay, were so eager to "put the piece across" and thereby get salaries, that soon I was everybody's slave. Scene by scene we put in the "pep," till we had it fairly racing along to a picture or a crash at each curtain. Came dress rehearsal. At ten a. m. the curtain was up for the first act, and at eleven o'clock that night we wearily left the theatre. The next day we started out on the road, and now not only Hughey Gore but the great manager himself and all his advisers sat in front. More changes were ordered. Hughey and I would have supper after the play and re-write till three a. m.—then sleep a few hours, breakfast, call the company at ten and hammer the new stuff into their heads in time for the night's performance. One night we put in a new third act and left the fourth act as it was. The two had no connection, but this did not trouble Brother Gore. He wanted to see the effect of our new act upon the house. When the curtain was down we went to bed, leaving a puzzled audience to wonder what the final act had to do with the rest of the piece.

This weird life went on for three weeks. The *morale* of the crowd grew shaky. Though Hughey held them sternly in line, fights and jealousies broke out. In several towns we got barely a hand. Funereal gloom behind the wings. But again the house was plainly pleased, and then there was joy and hope and pride, and a rush for the notices the next day—not the reviews of the whole play but the tiny passages at the end referring to the performances of this and that player—"puffs" or "roasts" as the case might be. The strain grew tense. The leading woman confided to me that she had been in two failures that year, and if this "perfectly wonderful play" did not succeed she did not know how she would ever meet her bills. She and I very nearly had an affair.

At last we came into New York. On the opening night, as the theatre filled, a fervent desire to fade away combined with a numb fascination that held me rooted to the spot. But when the orchestra struck up I abruptly left, crossed Broadway and stood upon the opposite side watching the crowds that poured along in the yellow glare like a swift river, wave on wave, bobbing, surging this way and that, hurrying, hurrying, shoving, laughing. In a harsh gay deafening hubbub on they came—bright colors in hats and cloaks and dresses—while from the cabs and carriages and automobiles that jammed the way came dainty glittering creatures whose lifted skirts showed satin slippers, silky ankles. As one of them got out of a taxi, I heard her say with a laugh to her friends,

"San Antonio was nevah like this!"

I had been in San Antonio, and somehow the mention of that town in faraway Texas came to me with a queer little shock. A picture of its principal street rose up clearly in my mind, and I had a sudden sense of the many towns and cities from which these noisy people had come. On they hurried—some of the faces friendly and appealing, other faces hard as nails. Hurrying, hurrying—to what? To see my piece? Far from it! Nearly all of them passed our theatre by. I recalled the lean sardonic smile of Hughey Gore as he had said,

"What do they care for your ideas? They're a lot of God-forsaken sheep. Make 'em bleat and you'll sell out the house. But real thinking? Ba—ba—ba!"

I went into the theatre. I found the house was nearly full; but as the gay hubbub increased, again I asked what such people cared about a play all underground. They wanted to laugh, squeal, shriek and shiver! Nothing more!

A slowly deepening hush, a glow, and the curtain rose abruptly.

It is a terrible ordeal to sit and watch a piece of your own, and feel every laugh and thrill instantly approved or damned. They come so fast, and you know they are coming. Growing tense and taunt you wait. A burst of laughter. "It got across!" But before you have had but a moment of triumph, along comes another—a thriller this time. And it fails to thrill—it misses fire—there are snickers all about! And the cold chills go creeping down the author's spinal column!

But now as act by act went by I began to sense about me a feeling that here was something out of the common. I caught approving nods and looks from various radical friends of mine who applauded certain red-hot lines. The big scene came—twelve men and a boy trapped in a chamber underground. Walls of black, wet, glistening coal and heavy timbers stark as death. Their struggles, their wild bitter talk—ending up in a big speech. Down came the curtain. A moment's pause and it rose again—"two days later"—to disclose the same grim scene with its thirteen dead. Then from one damp dripping wall an enormous chunk of coal suddenly fell with a loud crash. Little shrieks from all over the dark house! A satisfied grunt from Hughey Gore. A slow silent curtain, up went the lights, and all about me I could see tense faces. Rising waves of applause and a roar for the author!

My curtain speech was brief that night, but later on in a café with many friends and relatives I responded to the toast, and it was hard for me to hide my deep, deep exultation. I remember my father's glow of pride, Aunt Amelia's smiling face, and my German friend who was happy as I. "Great, great propaganda!" he cried. Beside him sat young Dorothy, back from college for the event. She was an adorable kid that night. While eagerly discussing with him her hope to study music in his beloved Fatherland, she kept darting radiant looks at me. Obviously I had arrived!

Later in their little brown house I talked for hours with Lucy and Steve, and told of the plays I meant to write. The brilliant future loomed so close I had it almost in my hand. I told them why our American drama had been such a trivial thing. It was because the managers had never sized up the public right, had never got to the heart and soul of the great warm splendid American people, for whom that night I felt a boundless grateful love . . . I noticed that Steve and Lucy were yawning.

"Great Scott, what a young fool I am—keeping you people up! It's three o'clock!"

Lucy kissed me good-night.

"Oh my dear," she said, "I hope the play is such a splendid big success!"

I laughed and went on up to bed. They had asked me to stay with them that night. I slept a few hours, awoke with a start, and in a moment remembering and feeling a sharp chill of suspense, I threw on my clothes, hurried downstairs, and found the nine morning papers which I had ordered the day before. And on that dark December morn, without any breakfast, empty and cold, I read one after another the notices that killed my play.

"Highbrow"—"morbid"—"deadly dull"—"amateurish"—"preachy"—"doomed."

I read them sitting very still. All at once I fiercely rebelled. What did these fool critics know? Had not the house gone wild at the piece—at every act, at every line? But as though in answer, I read this:

"House packed with friends and radicals who did their best to save the play, but with the general public it will never have a chance."

All right, all right, we would see about that! I walked excitedly up and down. I heard Steve and Lucy coming downstairs. Now *they* were reading. My head ached. How cold it was! That infernal Oberookoff had forgotten the furnace again! He, too, had gone to my opening; this morning he had been here before me, had read the papers and in his depression all thought of the furnace had slipped his mind. Savagely looking for him now, I found him out in the vestibule perched on a step-ladder there and very gloomily cleaning the small window over the door. Abruptly I cried,

"Look here, Oberookoff——"

But he gave such a start that he lost his balance. Down he came! And a few moments later Steve announced,

"The poor boob has broken his arm."

Still no breakfast. On the whole a very dismal morning. And it was followed by dreary nights when arriving at the theatre and anxiously asking, "What is the house?" from the box office would come the growl, "Less than a hundred dollars tonight." I watched that Broadway throng go by—laughing, chattering, bleating sheep. In the theatre, night after night, I sat in the half empty place and heard the snickers and weary sighs. Behind the scenes was an awful gloom.

But one evening in the lobby a fat serious radical friend gripped my hand and said to me,

"A wonderful piece, old fellow! If it doesn't get over, your next one will!" And he added impressively, "The Single Tax would have saved your play."

At once growing interested then in the theory of the Single Tax, I took him out to have a drink, and he enlarged on his statement. Land values in New York, he said, had risen so outrageously that the rent of a Broadway theatre was a thousand dollars a week. So a strong fine intellectual play could not live unless it appealed at once to the rich vulgar common herd. In an hour he had persuaded me to become the dramatic critic of "The Single Taxer." This soothed me a bit. More balm arrived in the form of flattering notices in various radical papers and so-called "high-brow" magazines. I was "a hope," "a portent," and even "a light on the horizon." My play was "the first rumble from the proletarian depths"; it was "the first wind of the dawn."

In my family it was not so. Dad plainly considered the piece a frost; Aunt Fanny was beautifully sympathetic; Lucy and Steve were friendly and kind; even Aunt Amelia was depressed. But there was one of them at least who still gave me what I craved. On the night my play was taken off, my cousin Dorothy came to town. She had saved her money, bless her, and bought two boxes and filled them with friends, blooming college girls and boys. She persuaded me to join them there. And they looked on me with such evident awe and admiration—as a journalist who lived in the slums, a socialist, an anarchist, and above all a writer of plays—that I was soon placidly acting a part. I took them behind the scenes, where they did not notice the gloom; and after the play I rushed them down in taxis to my studio for a shadowy supper dance.

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3.

In the next two weeks I saw much of "my niece," as I called Dorothy at the time. It made her perfectly furious. "I'm not your niece—I'm your cousin!" She would turn away, and then swinging around she would implore. "Oh Larry, please be nice to me!" The stout-waisted, merry, solemn, emphatic kid of a few years back had been transformed by magic—her figure softly rounded out, small hands and feet, and soft blonde hair curling down into her eyes, to be blown back impatiently. Her eyes were still a vivid blue. They would never meet mine for more than a moment, then dart away. She was an intimate lovable girl, all filled with new intensities. She was not so sure of her music now, although she was working hard at it still and had not given up her plan of going abroad to study.

"For the pure joy of playing—yes; but for a life profession—no. Or at least I'm not so certain. I'm afraid—oh I don't know—I simply cannot see myself in Carnegie Hall—making a really big success! I'm too old! The others have such a start! And I want it real or nothing—no matter what it is I do! And I find there are so *many* things!"

From Seven Pines we took long walks back into the

Christmasy hills, and she talked of her friends at college. Some were "perfect wonders;" some, "too detestable for words." She talked of the long talks they had, and then of long talks about these talks with her mother, whom we both agreed was, "simply a human miracle." She was such a "practical" mother. Without having been to college herself, she could so wonderfully "enter in" and give such mighty sound advice. What Dorothy wanted to do, I learned, was to make such a place for herself in college that her daughter later on—but at this point she reddened a bit, called herself a little goose, and began to ask me rapid questions as to my work and the life I led with anarchists.

"What do they really want and mean?"

But this sort of talk went better in town. When she came to Lucy to spend the night, I took her to the theatre and after that to a café; and there she asked the most unexpected and the most surprising things as to life in this roaring world today, in which college girls she was convinced would soon play a tremendous part. "So we simply have to know things, you see!" I began to tell her things. When she went back to college I sent her books she ought to read; and when she came again to the city I read her a new play of mine and took her to several radical meetings, where she sat bolt upright, round-eyed, missing not a trick. In Lucy's home we had long discussions, and Dorothy eagerly told her plans. She wanted to work, to have a real job, to do something, get something, be something. Good-naturedly I told her that she ought to be my wife.

"I can't!" she exclaimed. "I'm your cousin!" At our laughter she blushed crimson. "Larry, I hate you!" she declared.

Just before the beginning of summer, one night out at Seven Pines, her mother spoke of her and said,

"I want you to be careful, Larry."

I looked at my aunt in blank surprise, then started to laugh, and at her look of discomfiture I laughed till the tears were in my eyes. My arm was around her and I said,

"My dear but sentimental aunt——"

"I am not sentimental!"

"Then learn the truth. For your nephew is a wise old guy and he knows young Dorothy like a book. If she marries at all it will not be till after forty such affairs. My only fear for that lovable kid is that she'll live and die an old maid."

"I should not be displeased—not displeased in the least," said Aunt Amelia stiffly. "You talk as if it were a disgrace. I should think, Larry, that with your views—views of the most modern kind, and some of them boyish, to say the least—the idea of a self-respecting, freedom-loving woman's remaining single if she likes——"

"Gosh but you're modern!" I exclaimed. And we laughed and kissed each other. For all my attempts to make fun of her, I could not conceal my admiration for the way she kept up with the times. She helped me constantly with my plays—a keen discerning critic and friend. She was forever reading new books, and such affairs as suffrage meetings did not phase her in the least. She even marched in a parade. Her old hunger for new things was almost deeper than before. She now had a car which she declared had restored the wings of her youth. In this she frequently flew to town. Her chauffeur knew her love of speed, and—I regret to tell it—my dear patriotic aunt was "pinched" one day for breaking the laws of her beloved country.

"You're absolutely right, young man," she said bravely to the cop.

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4.

But if my Aunt Amelia had splendidly retained her youth, there was somebody else in the family whose aging filled me with regret. Where was my chum of long ago? Steve was growing middle-aged. There was a time when he could be stirred to mirth or pity, wonder, anger, by the numberless miracles to be seen in this hodge-podge of a town. And once he had shown an open mind to the big startling ideas expressed by radical friends of mine, who knew the truest thing in the world—that only by the sweeping statements, the courageously shouted half-truths, of the few daring pioneers is the path cut through the jungle for the accurate chaps behind. But Steve's mind was closing now. Not that he was sleepy or dull—the fact was, he had hit his stride and his mind was simply racing along. The passion of our nation for speed had got him and he was narrowing down—although, as often happens, to himself he seemed to be broadening.

That is one of the great queer secrets of this strenuous life of ours. Broad-minded foreign visitors see fellows like Steve with a look upon their faces as though they were driving racing cars, and the smiling foreigners never suspect that each of these racing Yankees is in reality broadening—rapidly and feverishly—in a world to him so wonderful that he gladly shuts out all other worlds as annoying obstacles in the way of the bright and limitless vistas before his keen and hungry eyes.

I met a wholesale plumber once who had narrowed down to bathtubs. In a single hour's talk he took my mind and fancy soaring after him over our land. Out over the sultry deserts and plains we flew on the wings of the morning like gods, showering bathtubs on mankind. Then he spoke of the market of the world. He took me to Russia, Italy, France, Africa, China and India. His mind had roved all over the earth, swooping down upon filthy Russian huts or stinking cities in the Far East. He had learned how many times a year the peoples of the earth took baths—indoors in tubs or clouds of steam and in the sea, the lakes and the rivers. He had done this to the neglect of his business.

"The fact is," he confided, "it has become a hobby of mine."

It was more than that, it had become a great world-wide crusade of his. Hundreds of millions of poor devils needed a bath and didn't know it. But they would!

"I want to say," he told me, "that the people of this earth, my friend, are headed straight for democracy—a square deal for every little kid from his birth clear through to his funeral. I don't care whether he's a Wop or a Greaser, a Nigger, a Hindoo or a Chink, or a Christ-forsaken little Turk. They're all going to wake up to the fact that they've been stung from the days of the Ark—that they need baths—clean decent homes, good schools for their kids, the right to vote—for the president, governors, congressmen and—oh hell, all that stuff! And they're going to get it!"

This was but his starting point, mere elemental justice. He went on to reveal to me what things of beauty baths could be. He took me to the unfinished house of a brand-new millionaire and showed me a spacious chamber there, its walls and ceilings rosy with nude joyous dancing maids, its lighting artfully contrived to simulate that of a woodland glade—and in its floor broad marble steps led down to a bath the like of which I had not dreamed existed.

"I've been studying Roman history lately," said my narrow Yankee friend.

To return to Steve, he was like that—narrowing, but all the while feeling the world he had chosen broaden out before his eyes in a way so swift and dazzling that his days and nights became one long exciting race to keep up.

"If your revolutionist friends," he said, "would quit looking way ahead to a little toy impractical world concocted out of their own heads—and would wake up and see what's here—they'd realize we are rushing along as humanity never rushed before. To keep up with my job today, there are a thousand books I should read, and a hundred magazines a month—most of 'em in foreign languages."

Then he would describe to me, in terms cold and technical, the triumphs, the discoveries and still more the baffling and therefore doubly fascinating unsolved problems in his world. It was exasperating to be tied so closely to his job. But Bannard, his chief, was getting old. He was turning over more and more of his most serious cases to Steve, and was loading on him besides the graceless job of begging funds for the large busy hospital of which Bannard was in charge. Steve was forever scouting about some millionaire or other, learning how to approach the man and coax the money out of him. He had lost his dread of being known as a rich girl's husband now, for by hard work he had made good, his position was secure; and so he no longer balked at asking aid from men like Dad. The government ought to back such work, but Steve's contempt for the politicians was even deeper than before. His attitude was shown one night at a meeting of doctors in his house. Most of them were from the tenements. I forget what the meeting was about, but I remember clearly how a little Russian Jew raised a terrible storm by his speech.

"In New York if a doctor is honest, he gotta admit he's a grafter," he said. "I don't blame him—understand —I got a family of my own an' I gotta earn a living— an' half my patients don't pay me a cent. So when I get a patient who pays, what can I do? I get what I can. Sometimes I try to stop myself. Last month I took out an appendix. The operation was O. K. Now you gentlemen know that after the first few days in a case like that—no complications—everything nice—you don't need to see the patient each day. But the boy's mother was crazy about him. She said to me, 'Doctor, please come twice a day'. I said to her, 'Mrs. Weinstein, your boy's doing well, he's all out of danger and you are poor. Be sensible. Keep your money'. So I tried to stop myself. But did I fool myself? Not at all. Even while I was talking I thought to myself, 'This will make her think—what an honest doctor. He tries to lose money'. And sure enough. Mrs. Weinstein smiled on me like a mother. 'Doctor,' she said, 'you're an honest man. I want everything done for my little boy—understand?—all the modern improvemnts. I leave it to you'. So she left it to me. An' she got all the modern improvements!

"An' take it again when you have a patient who is a case for a specialist. You take him there, and it's ten to one you never get from the patient a cent. If he lives he pays the specialist, and if he dies his family pays—but you they forget, you were only the doctor called in at the start. So the specialist sends in a bill with your fee included in his own, and then he sends you your percentage. If he don't he knows damn well you'll never take him a patient again. All right—it's legal—but it's graft. I want to be honest with myself. Am I worse than the rest? Am I even as bad? Not at all. On my street I'm the only doctor who won't take abortions—and I'm the only doctor there who don't own a big automobile."

His speech was interrupted by a perfect storm of protest. Doctors jumped up all over the room to express their utter disdain for this wretched little grafter who judged others by himself. His face grew red and he rose again.

"I am ashamed of you!" he cried. "A few of you are born in New York—their talk I can understand. But half of you come from Russia—and there a man may graft like hell, but at least he is honest with himself. He don't fool himself. When he looks at himself he sees himself. He even learns to enjoy himself by telling himself what a God-damn mess he has made of himself! I don't mean we should do that here. Here I am an American—I have reached the Promised Land. I am in a free country, and I say, 'Well, what are you going to do with yourself? Stop talking—do something—do it quick!' And what I want we should do is this. We should have a campaign and say to the people, 'Why should we spend half our time on cases that don't bring a cent? We are men like you, with families—we need the money—so we graft. And this is bad for us and you. The sick are the business of you all—for if the sick aren't treated right, you get epidemics and so on. The city should pay us for our work—so that we can get out of the rush for the dollar and give our whole lives to our science, to study and keep ourselves up to date—and for any patient, rich or poor, give the best treatment to be had'!"

I remember the uproar that followed his speech, and how Steve rising lean and tall among those excitable foreigners began in his quiet Yankee way.

"To a certain extent I agree," he said, "with much that the previous speaker has said. I'll talk like a Russian and admit that I can remember a case or two where I used 'all the modern improvements.' But the remedy he suggests makes me think that he has forgotten the habit of looking facts in the face, which he learned to enjoy so deeply over there in his native land. For although he cannot trust himself he wants to trust his government. My advice to our analytical friend is that, instead of fooling himself by declaring joyously, 'Here I am in the Promised Land, a great free country'—let him ask, 'What is this country? How much do the mass of the people really care for their government?' What have they made it? Is there such honor and wisdom in the gang at City Hall, that we doctors want to place ourselves and all our patients rich and poor entirely under their tender care, their wise and intelligent control? If we give the Health Department a hundred million dollars a year to be paid in doctors' salaries, how long do you think the politicians will leave the Health Department alone?

"I wasn't born in Russia, but all my life it seems to me I've been facing the facts—and getting bumped. I haven't many illusions left; I have lost one by one nearly all of my gods. But one thing is left to me, and that is my deep humble faith in the astounding progress made by medical men in every land. I find myself constantly out of breath from trying to keep up with them. And so amazingly swift is their march, and so dazzling is the hope for all humanity in their work, that although I myself began at the bottom I say, 'For the sake of the health of mankind don't slow up science by binding it down to the dull slow mind of the average man—don't make it wait for democracy!' The average man is a poor little cuss who can't see farther than his nose. The great common mass of the people are sheep, and their governments are poor affairs. And at least for many years to come our science must look for support not to the common masses but to those big men at the top who have the minds and vision to see the importance of our work, and the money with which to drive it on!"

To this view Steve had arrived. When we were left alone that night I told him heatedly that he was wrong—that things were just the other way, that people were not sheep but men, with angry and impatient eyes—that democracy was unlikely to wait for his science, which was slow! But his only answer was a smile.

That our points of view were miles apart, was apparent again in his hospital—for the city poured in and was mirrored there.

In another hospital years ago, I had seen only "headline patients"—meek old clergymen side by side with Tenderloin girls and young millionaires, furious tenement housewives, murderers, burglars, Wall Street brokers, brooding inventors and poets half mad—some of them singing as they came, or groaning, laughing, gibbering. But it seemed to me now I saw deeper than that. I saw a few people in private rooms with special nursing, the best of care; while the common herd were in long crowded wards where delirious patients or those who were dying made the night hideous for the rest. I saw the wrecks of over-work in sweat-shops and in factories; I saw men crippled or paralyzed from accidents along the docks; and one afternoon I watched the arrival of ambulances and even trucks loaded with what at first appeared to be enormous bundles of rags, with long human hair hanging out at the ends—they were girls from a factory fire. I saw a case of blood-poisoning there, a man castrated by his wife. It had been done with his consent because, she said, they could not afford to risk having any more children. I saw people of all races there. They arrived dressed like Americans; but in the life-and-death crises inside, the thin veneer of Americanism disappeared, and in many tongues, in torrents of words now gutteral, now sweet and low, was revealed the vast dark background of memories from foreign lands, beliefs and superstitions, habits, customs, loves and hates, that looms over the city of New York . . . In brief, I saw wealth and poverty, and the races of the earth—all there.

But Steve saw nothing of the kind. As he went about the hospital immersed in his work of every day, he was to all appearances as blind as a practical man can be; and like so many practical men he was a hardened optimist. To my talk he replied impatiently by comparing the hospital of today with that of twenty years before. The world was growing better, not worse. His hospital, he admitted, was a mere oasis still. The sick went back into tenement homes to convalesce in dirt and din; they often had relapses and died. But he had his remedy for that. With his chief he was planning a service of visiting nurses and doctors to watch these convalescents, and he looked to a time not far ahead when every tenement in town would have a "health station" close at hand. Practically all sick people, unless they had exceptional homes, would be taken to hospitals where they belonged. Epidemics would be squelched at the start.

"We propose," he said, "not only to heal them after they're sick, but to keep the damn fools healthy."

At this, in my most withering tone, I asked how it felt to be God Almighty. Though I was nearly thirty now, my old instinctive love, as a boy, of mixing with all sorts and kinds, was become a fierce religion. It was called Democracy. But even in those fiery days, there came to me at moments a glimmering of what it was that made Steve's secret inner life. It was his ever deepening passion for the use of the knife. The deftness of his wonderful hands and the miracles which they performed were the talk of surgeons all over town. And engrossed in this never ending fight, in the weird mystery of it all, for him such trivial little things as classes, races and the like, dwindled away. Though money came to him quickly now, he seemed to have no thought of it. He saw less and less of his family. There were moments when he came out of his trance and realized the pace he was hitting. But it could not be helped, he said; there was so much to do and learn, and he had so little time.

"In these days if a surgeon reaches the top, he does it only by work so hard that he hasn't the stuff left in him to stay there over twenty years."

For him those years lay just ahead. Already old Bannard was stepping down and generously doing all he could to leave the younger man in his place.

And so in the year 1905, this tall, powerful, low-voiced Yank, who in 1893 had been Aunt Amelia's "stable boy," was on the eve of immense success.

For such things do still happen here.

CHAPTER VIII

1.

But it's queer how things will happen—even to these scientists. There is something so damnably savage at times in the way this universe is run. Here was a man who probably saved hundreds of lives every year. I had seen him narrow into his rut, which became to him a race-course high up on a mountain ridge, from which he saw big visions of what his science was to do. But now in a twinkling that was changed—by a slip, the merest little chance.

Early on a winter's night he left the house of a patient and was driven to his hospital. He had eaten no lunch and was tired and hungry, but he still had before him a case that required immediate operation. It was a most unusual case, and for all his fatigue he was eager to start, to open up his patient and find if his diagnosis were right. In spite of the late hour, many of the students had waited to see the operation, which was to be a clinic affair. Several other surgeons were there, and the internes of the hospital. The patient was already inside, being given the anæsthetic. His wife, a thin dark middle-aged Jewess, suddenly seized Steve's arm in the hall. He glanced down at her frightened face, and to her incoherent entreaties he made a quick gruff kind reply. His fatigue was forgotten. For the last time in his life he felt that tightening of the energies, that tense and quiet feeling of power.

The operation turned out to be even more than he had expected. There were complications. An hour passed. In the crowded little theatre, he forgot the mass of faces steeply sloping all about him and the rows of straining eyes. He spoke only to mutter quick requests; more often he merely reached out his hand, and his eager slaves divined what he wished. From time to time he glanced at the man who was giving the ether. Then on with the race. And all so silent. Barely a sound.

When at last his work was done, he noticed that the rubber glove on his right hand had been slightly torn, and on one of his fingers was a scratch. He scowled with annoyance. These things happen. He scrubbed up with disinfectants and went home for a light supper. He went to bed, he was fearfully tired and almost instantly dropped asleep. But toward dawn he awoke with a start.

"Who is it?" he asked abruptly.

For a moment there was no reply. Then he felt a dull little pain in his finger. And as he lay there in the dark, his annoyance changed to uneasiness. He got out of bed and went down to his office, used a lance and did various things. Now his head was aching, too, and the rest of the night he could not sleep. The next day he was running a temperature. "It's nothing!" he said impatiently; but Bannard being summoned ordered him to stay in bed. There his condition grew rapidly worse; and in the week that followed, all his everyday plans and worries grew trivial, small and dropped away. For Steve his whole life had all at once become terribly plain and simple.

"Will they be able to save my hand?"

At the end of a week they had come to a time when a decision must be made. A slight local operation would save his life but cripple his hand. There was still a chance, a slim one, that without operation he could pull through; and Steve fought hard to take this chance; but the others over-ruled him. He felt his own control of his life slipping suddenly away. He could hear our low voices in the next room, and we seemed mere outsiders.

Even Lucy was like that. Into his mind there flashed the thought,

"She has the power to decide. Why should she have it? How can she judge? What does she know of the hell it will be to live without the use of my hand?"

But soon after this she came into the room and he caught a glimpse of her face, white and strained. He pitied her, and then he began to feel relaxed and drowsy—he let go. They operated the same night. Although he was soon out of danger, his fever continued for several weeks; and Steve, who had never been sick in his life, was kept to his bed—his room like a prison. Surgery gone forever! At lightning speed his fancy would range out over the world of science, up the glorious vistas there into that bright promised land. Ever since he was a boy he had dreamed of surgery, and now to have to give it up drove the poor devil nearly insane. One afternoon when I was there, I heard a thick low cry from his room, and went in and found him on his bed, his face and hair all wet with sweat, teeth clinched, eyes glaring this way and that. He greeted me with a quick hard laugh and in incoherent phrases gave me a glimpse of his torment—the strenuous Yankee stricken down.

In vain Lucy racked her brains to find some other work for him. All the wider field of his science, including those big social dreams with which Bannard had once summoned us both into the service of mankind, had been to Steve mere things outside, goals and purposes, all very fine to fill in one's religion—but not for one's job! And his job was gone!

"He's so horribly kind and gentle!" Lucy exclaimed to me one night. "Poor boy—and so bitter underneath! This feeling of his for his surgery has all the—oh I don't know how to say it—all New England back of it! Steve could have easily been a fanatic. And now with his life work taken away he'll no longer be himself. He will try hard enough—he'll try too hard—don't you see?—that's just the kind he is. But unless he really finds something else I'm afraid he'll be—quite a different man."

As she looked into the future, there was something in my sister's face that made me vow we'd get this right. We had long consultations with Bannard, and each of us had talks with Steve—but at first without a sign of success. Although he insisted on getting up before it was time, his mental condition appeared to be worse. Still sunk in his tragedy, he rebelled; but like his silent old father he kept his bitterness to himself. Doggedly each morning he went to his hospital. He tried to follow Bannard's advice and take up the administrative work; but in his depleted condition and his shaken mental state the associations of the place made him look older every week. So consuming were the memories there. Lucy still hunted desperately for other kinds of work for him, and suggested this and that. Her failure weighed upon her, till at last worn out by the long ordeal she went to Aunt Amelia's—"to get a little rest," she said—in reality to go over it all with our resourceful loving old aunt.

. . . .

2.

I did not care in her absence to leave Steve too much alone, so I went to the hospital that night to get him to walk home with me. I had not seen him for some days, and I was surprised when he fell in at once with my proposal; and as we walked through the crowded streets it was a still greater surprise to find in his talk the indications of a most significant change.

Steve was getting out of himself. He had entered the hell of failure; and out of the first deep black hole of loneliness in his tragedy he had come to a wider consciousness of the failures upon every side. He began to see how blind he had been, how he had hardened with success. He reminded me of the year we had spent together on the Lung Block; he spoke of a little Galician Jew who had hanged himself one August night, of a hopelessly sodden Irish boy with an irresistible sense of humor who had been known as Dopey George, and of other human calamities there. He had become with his swift rise like a god above the dreary mass of commonplace humanity; but he felt their vast reality now, for he himself was one of them. Hedging him in on every side, they seemed to fill the universe. He began to get their point of view—in many ways so much more human and more real than that of the few gods above. What a fool he had been to imagine that men of his kind could cure the world by an operation, so to speak, to cut the failure out of it! On the other hand, he had little hope that the masses could ever lift themselves. It was as though, in his dark gloom, India and China had breathed on him from around the globe. And so prodigious was the weight of inertia he felt crushing down, that his fierce tensity was allayed. He had begun to relax, to rest—and a certain grim deep humor had crept into his view of it all. How blindly he had raced along. As for his future, he did not care. A new job was bound to come. That had lost its importance. For the moment he wanted just to stop and take time to look about him.

It may be that in my rush of relief I exaggerated the change in Steve, or it may have been only a mood that made him talk as he did that night. Still, he was different. The desperate tensity was gone.

On reaching home that evening, we found Oberookoff there. We asked him to stay to supper; and this Russian friend of ours, who in a dumb devoted way had watched Steve in his crisis, now glanced at him from time to time—and noticing at once the change, his own face glowed with happiness. Outside, a snowstorm had begun. It reminded him of his native land, and he spoke of his love for such great winds, his joy in the feeling of powerlessness and tiny insignificance when blindly driven in a storm.

"And human life—it is like that." Here he rose abruptly to his full enormous height. "I am so small, I am nothing!" he cried. "And life is a blizzard—each piece of snow is my blind brother—small as I. But all of us together—ah!—we are making clouds of white—between the earth and those high stars that nobody can see but God!"

Steve watched him with a curious smile. Later, when Oberookoff had gone, he took up a book and began to read—but from time to time, idly puffing his pipe, he would stare into the coals of the fire, drowsy, relaxed. The room was warm.

About ten o'clock the old-fashioned door bell jangled loudly. It was Dad. Dining out with Aunt Fanny, he had left early to come here.

"I was sitting between two women so outrageously fat," he declared, "that I suddenly yearned for a quiet smoke with two thin men. So here I am."

He lit a cigar and settled back. But his genial manner was rather forced; and as he sat in his evening clothes with his well-fed air and shrewd keen eyes, I thought to myself, "How blind he is to everything in the world but success." And, remembering my talk with Steve, I could not help smiling to myself. My father did not belong here tonight. Sitting between the two stout dames, after dining long and well he should have stayed with their husbands to gossip about stocks and bonds. He had nothing in common now with Steve. Though he had been friendly and kind as you please ever since the tragedy, he had revealed his pity for Steve as a man who had dropped out of the race. What had he come for tonight? No doubt he had some definite aim, some practical way to put Steve on his feet and give him a chance to go limping on. Already he was leading up to it—and Steve, in the strangely quiet mood of a race-horse who has decided just to wonder at life for a while, was looking at Dad with the same half-smile with which he had watched Oberookoff. Another human specimen.

My father was speaking of his mills. They were still expanding so rapidly, it was hard to keep up with their growth and head off certain wild ideas. He told us of the things he was doing to improve conditions there, and ended with his latest plan—which was to build a hospital to handle industrial accidents. Dad leaned forward with a smile.

"Well?" he asked. "Do I make myself clear?"

"You do."

"How about it?"

Steve shook his head.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing at all. It's mighty decent of you—and kind."

"Then in God's name why not take me up? You know I'll give you a free hand. You can build it any way you like——"

"Better think twice, Steve," I suggested. "This will be a very big thing. To take care of all the thousands of men that Dad is planning to mangle and maim——"

"Oh you go to the devil," said my good-humored parent, and he went on to press his point. On account of the infernal carelessness of employees, there was to be a tremendous future for hospital work of just this kind; and the man who got in at the start, and made himself an authority on industrial accidents, would take a big place in the national life.

"You're right," said Steve. "It's plain as day. And I don't see why I'm turning it down. But I seem to be."

Dad shot a puzzled look at him.

"What else have you in mind?" he asked.

"I don't know as I can tell you yet."

"All right, my boy, take plenty of time—but I'll hold this over for a while."

And he turned the conversation to Lucy and the children. But he was growing uncomfortable now.

"Am I feverish?" he demanded. "Or is it as hot in this room as it feels?"

"No, you're not feverish," said Steve. "The fact is, we've a furnace man who loves to dream he's a snowball in hell—I mean a snowflake in a storm. He had supper with us tonight, and forgot to close the furnace draft."

This finished my father. He rose to leave, with an uneasy glance at his son-in-law. We chuckled together when he was gone.

"How could I tell him," Steve remarked, "that the career I had in mind was to be a snowflake for awhile? Now I'll fix that furnace and then I move we go to bed."

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3.

When Lucy came back the following day, she was surprised as I had been at the apparent change in her husband. She said that Aunt Amelia wanted them to bring the children for a long stay at Seven Pines, where Steve could have an abundance of time to get back his strength and think things out. Lucy felt so sure, she said, that he could do this best alone—but Aunt Amelia's advice was always so worth listening to. She always had such good ideas—and besides, she knew people, knew Steve so well. As Lucy anxiously enlarged upon the advantages of the place, Steve went over and kissed her and said,

"Been pretty tough, hasn't it, little wife? No need to talk of this any more. It's a mighty good plan. Go as soon as you like."

The relief and delight on Lucy's face were good to see. They came out to the country that same week, and from time to time I saw them here. He had relapses, days on end when the old fierce hunger was on him again—

but most of the time it was not so. Lucy and Steve both loved the country, and over hard and snowy roads they took tramps back through the hills. I went with them several times, and I sat in at long, long talks in the evening with our wise old aunt.

And whether the first suggestion came from Lucy or our aunt, or from Steve himself, I do not know. But as the winter changed to spring a new idea took root in his mind. There came lazy balmy days, reminders of his boyhood. Men and boys were at work on the fields or repairing barns and fences. Their voices and their distant calls, and the sound of hammers, axes, saws, were to be heard on every side. What a contrast to the work in the city. The birds began coming up from the South, and great patches of vivid green began to be seen in the meadows. Steve could feel his life renewed. What strange deep healing power old Mother Nature still possessed. How much better than all the drugs and the glittering knives of the surgeons.

The idea soon took definite form. About three miles from Seven Pines, on the side of a half wooded ridge there was an abandoned farm, with an old mill and dam on the creek that came rushing down from the hills behind. It had long been in Steve's family, and his father gladly gave his consent that it should be developed now into a sanitarium. Steve went to Bannard in New York, who gave his warm approval. For serious surgical cases, he said, on account of Steve's long experience his place would be a godsend to the surgeons of New York.

I sometimes feel that over our country hovers a great creature, spare and lean, with quivering wings, who might be called the God of Speed. If such there be, a grim delight would have come in his great dark gleaming eyes, had he looked down on Seven Pines. For now, in spite of his deep change, this strenuous Yankee surgeon, who had left the fever and speed of the town for the peace of country life, began to regather his energies, speed up again and narrow down! He was studying sanitariums, making frequent flying trips to study them better at first hand. Then with the eager help and advice of Lucy and Aunt Amelia, the plans he made were changed and changed. Soon the work was under way, and Steve was heartily cursing the calm deliberation of the masons and the carpenters. He plunged into a thousand details, and through them all he drove his way, unregenerate, zealous as before!

And yet there was a difference. Life was deeper, simpler now. Instead of rushing about in town from one disease to another, here he was working out of doors, upon the house or about the grounds. He regained his health of body and soul. Oberookoff had been sent for, and he was enchanted with the spot. With Steve he worked from dawn until dark, and remained serenely untroubled by the lack of progress that he made. The idea of the work was what appealed.

"We shall give to sick people God's work out of doors —and they shall be well!" he told me. For these sick brothers of the future he was constantly thinking up jobs. To rebuild for them the saw-mill was Oberookoff's own idea. "There they shall saw the logs," he declared, "and daily swallow fresh the air, and the smell of the logs, and the beautiful noises from the stream."

He worked happily at the little old mill. He had a fearful tussle with the broken water wheel; more than once it hurled him into the pond. But he was unruffled. Never mind. The idea had been started, and we should see! Oberookoff liked the workmen here. They were so ready to stop work and enter into long talks with him. And these fellows fed him with the most outrageous lies. He told them that for several years he had been writing constantly to his countryman, "Mister Tolstoy," in order that through Tolstoy's pen Russia might learn the splendid truth about life in America. This set their imaginations to work on tales to which he listened with an eager brotherly smile. One teamster told him solemnly that he never beat his horses and that he gave each animal forty quarts of oats a day. Whereupon Oberookoff sat down in delight and wrote,

"Dear Mister Tolstoy: America is a wonderful land! Here all the men are kind to their beasts!"

It was Steve who told me this incident. He now called Oberookoff "Doc," and stoutly declared that the Russian would prove a treasure as a guide and friend for convalescents here.

"And more than that," he added. "Our friend the Doc, for all his blunders, has a lot of truth in him; and it's just the kind of truth we need for the Tired Business Man. We think ourselves so practical—but what ridiculous lives we lead."

Yes, Steve had changed. He could look back with Lucy now and realize the madness of the years he had left behind. The old causes of discord between them were gone. There was a good school for Tommy nearby; and moreover, Steve had time for his son, and he drew close again to his wife. Here she could enter into his work. It was so much broader than surgery; and, together with the humanity gained in the recent crisis, it was making him more human and kind. For after the first strenuous rush the place took on a quiet air. He had to deal with convalescents for whom the really critical work had already been done with the knife. It was not until years later that he went in for nerve complaints and built his national reputation. In the beginning his work was small.

And while I liked to come out to his home and rest from my own mad life in town, half consciously I looked on his work as pretty small potatoes, on Steve himself as a "has been," a chap who had dropped out of the game.

CHAPTER IX

1.

For now I myself, after many years with little progress in my work, had taken a spurt and was rapidly rising to fill my little tinsel place in that glittering world, the theatre. Since my labor play I had written others, possibly fifteen in all. Five of them had been produced, and three had been successful. I had left my downtown rooms and taken a small apartment high up in an old brick building over on Fifty-Ninth Street, looking down into the Park. There a Jap looked after me. I was constantly dining out. Tall and thin, a bit more stooped, mood often "blue," I keenly enjoyed my life, nevertheless; and out of my explorations, ideas for plays or single scenes and character bits were constantly coming up in my mind.

Although the heaving under-world had lost its novelty for me, I still called myself a Red, contributed to radical movements and took an interest in strikes. This was due, perhaps more than I realized, to my cousin Dorothy. For turning over and over in her extremely attractive young head the ideas I had given her, on leaving college at twenty-one Dorothy had surprised us by resolutely taking a job in a big New Jersey mill town notorious for its radicals.

"I've thought it all out thoroughly," she said, "and I've decided that I need something really hard—and ugly even. I think a girl ought to know how it feels to live like that. I don't suppose I'll be much use, but I bet I'll learn an awful lot, and I mean to help as much as I can."

It was quite a shock to her mother at first, but she made a success of it from the start. In the little "settlement house" she had charge of the girls' clubs. By years of work she had made herself a really fine pianist—and this helped; for the girls in her clubs were Italians, French, Hungarians and Austrian-Poles. They could sit by the hour hearing her play, and almost every evening she would play for them to dance. At times she had long talks with them. I was one of her principal backers, and going out to see her there I picked up the story for "The Woman in The Shawl"—a play in which I tried to show a Sicilian girl reaching New York, changing into American clothes and assuming a veneer of American talk and manners, under which however still ran the hot Sicilian blood; and this blood at the proper time boiling into action gave me such a big third act that the piece had a successful run. I had promised my cousin in case of success to give half the proceeds to her work. Ruefully I stuck to my bargain, and her settlement benefited to the extent of fifteen thousand dollars. Feeling as though I owned the place, I still kept up my visits there, and as time went on I began to meet various wild young foreigners who seemed to be more than determined to blow the whole world to smithereens, but who in the meantime were ready enough to drop in at Dorothy's club for a dance. She beamed on them in a friendly way and went serenely on with her work. They considered her "bourgeois," and they were right; but her influence steadily increased—for in addition to giving her girls a good time she was always glad to talk things out and get their views, not only about their jobs in the mills but about their many love affairs. She was constantly helping girls who were sick.

"The conditions in these mills are simply outrageous!" she told me.

When she had been there about three years, a strike broke out in the mill town. In a week it had grown so big that a national organization, led largely by my former friends from the mines in Colorado, considered this a promising place for breaking into the eastern field. They arrived in force and directed the struggle with such success that it was soon being featured high in the papers. The family was at once alarmed on Dorothy's account, and despite my protestations I was sent to try to induce her to drop her work for the time and come home. But I did nothing of the kind. I found the small club-house transformed, crowded with long tables and troops of merry children. Dorothy with her sleeves rolled up was helping her chief and one other woman to manage a soup kitchen there. I went with her to a great out-of-door meeting and saw a whole hillside vivid and gay with the bright colored clothes of some thirty thousand men and women and children, listening to the speakers who from a high platform shouted down their prophecies of a new freedom on the earth. I stayed over night; and in the dawn, with a light rain drizzling down, I watched the pickets along the mills and witnessed a few scuffles between them and the militia. I saw one lad who shouted "Scab" knocked down by the butt end of a rifle. Blood oozed slowly from over one ear. From there I went to Dorothy's place and breakfasted with two hundred kids. Then I took the train to New York and telephoned Aunt Amelia that there was nothing to worry about.

"She is being quite sensible," I said, "and the work she is doing is perfectly safe."

I sat down in my studio and tried to go on with the second act of a play called, "His Impossible Wife." But I could not work. In a few days Dorothy telephoned me to come back, and I was soon drawn into preparations for an enormous pageant which they planned to give in New York. So fundamentally deep and true was their dramatic instinct, that in rehearsing I soon found it was better not to interfere, but to let them work out in their own way the big mass scenes depicting their strike. We had hired the Garden in New York. It held twenty thousand people, and the expenses were so high that unless we could pack the house there would be a heavy money loss. The arrangements seemed to have no end. Many committees were organized, made up for the most part of foreign radicals in New York. Chaos seemed to reign in all. Money was spent like water—quarrels raged—the time was short.

Our two thousand actors arrived in town just in time for a last rehearsal. It was a tumultuous affair. Masses of men and women and children, singing dirges and strange songs in foreign tongues about the Great Revolution, came marching down the long middle aisle, ascended the big platform with a huge drop curtain behind to represent the jail-like mills, and there they simply did again what they were doing day by day in the stark drama of their strike. They did not act, they simply lived. The performance that night was a great success. I remember the restless sea of faces filling the dim arena and the galleries up to the roof. Red flags of all countries waving there. A babel of voices in many tongues—wild cheering, wave on wave of it, till the air quivered with the sound.

Dorothy sat by my side. She barely spoke. Her look was fixed, her color high; and as those deeply stirring songs, French, Polish and Italian, rose in a weird minor key filling the tremendous hall, her face contracted and I felt the slowly tightening clutch of her hand. It grew cold in mine—and I wished I were still young enough to feel this so intensely.

But to that dramatic night there was a dismal aftermath. For expenses had mounted up so high that our net profit was almost nil; and when it was handed over to the strike committee, there was a fearful whoop-dy-do. This was what came of allowing the "bourgeois intelliggentzia" to have any part in the sacred war being waged by the proletariat! As the son of a well-known millionaire, I came in for the greatest share of the yowl. And having by now expended a good deal of time and money, I dropped out of the strike in disgust and went on about my business.

One night some two weeks later Dorothy came to my rooms.

"Larry, tell me what I can do. The strike is almost lost," she said. She had changed to a startling degree, grown pale and thin in a losing fight. She told how the affairs of the strikers had rapidly gone from bad to worse.

"There were nearly five hundred children today—and barely a single one of them laughed. And they've got to be fed, you know—and somehow the strike has got to be won! I've never been good at economics, but the simple human truth about this fight is clear as day! Those people have been worked too hard and paid too little! And it's wrong!"

Suddenly her look met mine; and as though she read my feeling that the strike was hopeless now, into her angry bright blue eyes came a flash of reproach that seemed to say:

"You got me into this—long ago! Why can't you be as young as I? *Why can't you still be angry?*"

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Help them—us!"

"I'll do what I can. But if you're still to be any use in this fight, the first thing for you to do is to realize it has grown so big that you can't affect it very much one way or the other. Stick to your job—those five hundred children. There will probably be a thousand soon, and your job is to feed them. Stop worrying over getting the food. I'll get it—I'll raise the money here. Those kids, no matter how many there be, will be fed each day right through to the end—that is, they will be if you keep yourself in hand, my dear."

As I put my hand on her small shoulder, I could feel her trembling stop.

"You're right, Larry—you're perfectly right. I'll stick to that—and—thank you."

"It's nine o'clock. Have you had any supper?"

"No——"

"Let's have some."

After that, I took her in a hansom for an hour's drive in the park, where a light soft rain was falling and the lights from the great hotels glimmered from the misty heights. And we planned out the work to be done and then talked of ourselves for a while—what each of us wanted most in life. When I left her at the ferry boat—for she would not let me take her back—I wished again that I were young.

"Goodnight, Larry dear."

"Goodnight. Good luck."

In the weeks that followed, in spite of what I could do to help I felt the strain on her tighten each day, as the number of children grew and grew, and gloom and despair spread through the town. She stuck grimly to her post. But when the strike ended in defeat, and her working girls' club closed down, Dorothy had a severe collapse and went home to Seven Pines to rest.

She was months in getting back her strength. Moreover, her mother was growing old. And because, for all her new ideas, Dorothy was at bottom a personal home-loving soul, she put off getting a new job until the life at Seven Pines had a hold on her that was hard to break.

"At her age," said Aunt Amelia, "three solid years of that life is enough. She's only a girl of twenty-four, and she ought to be having a good time."

So she packed her off on visits to college friends, both East and West, and out to Ed on his ranch in Nebraska and to the old family home in the big college town in Wisconsin. And Dorothy did have a good time—for she was quite capable still of being the life of a party. Gayly and intensely, too, she went through several affairs that nearly ended in engagements—but not quite. For the years in that New Jersey town had left their mark. She still wanted a job and proposed to get it. Only—it was hard to choose. Life was so exceedingly pleasant, her days were all so crowded now. Often at first she came to New York and I gladly took her on sprees as of yore—as a rule to the opera or a play, but again we went to meetings in Cooper Union or Carnegie Hall and heard the wrongs of the masses discussed; and once we spent an April day out on Ellis Island watching ten thousand immigrants enter into this promised land.

There are many such girls and women about. They are such blithely personal souls, you never suspect what they have been—until suddenly in this shifting changing national panorama there comes a strike, a flying machine, a farmers' rising against the Trusts, or some other little thing like that—and then you are dumbfounded at the views so stoutly expressed by your demure delightful friend. She smiles at your astonishment and explains that she herself once went through a strike and was sent to jail—or that she spent a year or two as assistant to a chap who was trying to make a flying machine—or that as a school teacher in Kansas she led a parade of farmers once under the slogan, "Bust the Trusts!" She looks like a perfect lady; but in these days when women at last have bullied the men into letting them vote, many a staunch conservative old crook of a politician, who beams upon her with approval as she demurely enters the polls, would start back in amazed disgust could he see how she marks her ballot inside.

My cousin Dorothy was like that.

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2.

But I did not see so much of her now. For I was writing plays again—in a life still filled with fascination, tense, uneven—ups and downs. Long times of easy living, writing—then with a rush into rehearsal and a swiftly deepening strain. And so engrossed did I become in my narrowing little world, that I was barely conscious of how I dropped my former friends. With the warm radical faith of my youth I did what so many of my busy countrymen did with their religion. They did not become atheists—they simply forgot to go to church. I did not become conservative—I simply forgot to go down to the "slums." I was too busy. Ideas and scenes and characters kept crowding into my fertile brain, enough for a dozen plays ahead. The managers kept pushing me. I was writing two or three plays a year—and the fact, that for every success I had at least two failures, only increased my impatient zeal. I was far from satisfied with my work. Good spots in it here and there, but on the whole so far below the European standard that at times I was ashamed of the stuff which came out of rehearsal.

But if I was humble about my work, it was not so in the life I led. For I had become in the great panorama one of those innumerable and constantly emerging gods whom the people delight to honor. Even now when I am old and blind, and alone in the silent creaky night in this dearly haunted old home of my boyhood—(observe the pathos of the above, for I was always so good at that)—I redden a bit as I look back to those years when I was flattered all up and down the Avenue. For my stepmother had become more smilingly gracious than ever before At forty-two, Aunt Fanny had kept her beauty to such a degree that, together with her husband's money and her own good-humor and tact, it had landed her very high indeed in that magic vaudeville circuit known as Newport-and-New York. Into this life she launched me then; and as I went about to dinners, dances and week-ends, in the course of time I was more and more pleased to play the dark mysterious role of the all-knowing dramatist who with a partly pitying but still more derisive smile looks down upon this fevered life, these tragedies and comedies, all of which he knows so well. In fact, I got myself into a state where even Aunt Fanny frowned a bit. She hinted that I was getting spoiled and that I needed freshening up, and she urged upon me a young wife and babies howling in the night.

Each time she tried to marry me off, I smilingly shook my wise old head. But I did marry, all the same—though not in the way that she had planned. And my marriage, though a brief affair, gave me such a shock of disgust—with my wife and still more with myself—that it did for me what a certain nasty little germ had once done for poor old Steve.

Her stage name was Mabel Grey, and we came together at one of those times when a score of people, half mad at the start and growing madder every day, rehearse a piece for the theatre and do their worst to "put it across." The play was His Impossible Wife. I had been writing it at the time of the big strike two years before. It was the common story of the self-made American who in his youth, while he is still a miner or a butcher, a puddler in a steel mill or something equally grimy and rough, marries a cook in a mining camp or a girl in a steam laundry. Later he climbs the American ladder. What then becomes of the wife at his side? A number of things can happen. First—she is so quick and smart that she keeps pace with her husband and, though ponderous ladies of wealth may frown or sneer at first at her breaks, she worsts them in each tussle and emerges triumphant at the top. Second—she is impossible. With no more work for her big red hands, she sits around and eats too much, grows heavy and dull. Her hats are a joke. Her children go away to school, and when they come home they're ashamed of "ma." Her husband's new friends and their wives smile at her discreetly. She glowers back, and to herself rips out fine old Yankee oaths or folds her hands in mute despair.

Her husband then does one of three things. Dénouement one—he is staunch and true. For her sake he gives up the frivolous world and sits at home in his slippers with "ma," drunk or sober. I knew a manufacturer whose wife had become a perfect old souse, but when a jovial friend of his suggested a charming young mistress instead, he answered.

"No, I'll stick to my wife. That old bitch stood by me when I was at the bottom, and I propose to stand by her now." And he gloomily added, "Right into the coffin."

But if such bright and appealing devotion is often seen in our national show, there are still two other dénouements as common. Dénouement two—the man takes up with one fluffy young female after another, pays their rent and buys them pearls and evening clothes and satin slippers—leads a devil of a life. Wife knows it, grins and bears it, and settles heavily into her grave. Dénouement three—the husband stays perfectly respectable. He forsakes the Catholic faith, becomes a serious vestryman in a fashionable Episcopal church, meets a delightful young woman there, well groomed, clever and discreet, and after various talks and scenes, in her home, in his own and later in court, leads her solemnly to the altar and takes her for better or for worse—while his original wife is left, with a generous alimony, comfortably to meditate on the immortality of man.

This last plot was the one I selected. Although I was quite well aware of its disadvantages—grim, no happy ending, immoral, no young lovers—in fact, almost sure to fail—in one of my lofty artist moods I heroically chose this story as the most powerful of the lot. I went at it hard. Each time I grew stale, I put it aside. I re-wrote the piece again and again, I worked my big scenes up too high and then brought them sternly down. This should be real or nothing! This should be one honest picture of our chaotic national life from the bottom right up to the top. But simple. No ranting—plenty of laughs but none of them forced—and absolute justice to all involved. No vampire stuff for the second wife, no martyr's halo for the first. At last with a heroic take-it-or-leave-it scowl on my face I gave the 'script to my manager. He read it and talked to me like a son. But I held out so doggedly for the piece just as it was—no monkeying with it, understand!—that with a curious smiling light in his large gray and yellow eyes, he munched his cigar and said to me,

"All right, Larry, I'll take a chance. Got anyone yet in your mind for the girl?"

"She isn't a girl!" I shot back at him, my suspicions instantly aroused. "She's a big heavy woman of forty-five. Her stage business is to sigh, clear her throat and fold her hands on her stomach. Her corsets don't fit her."

"Christ," he murmured sadly, "what a frost this piece will be."

"Then why put it on?" I retorted. "Let me try it somewhere else!" Up went his hand.

"Look here, son—how about this? Put a little more speed in your husband. Get him up to the top at thirty-five, and let his wife be thirty."

"No!"

"We're a speedy country, boy. You can see just such fellahs all about. I got up myself at thirty-five." His look grew pathetic. "And let me tell you, Larry, that when I put on this piece my old woman will yowl like a pirate. The wife is real enough—don't worry. And they're just as real at thirty as they are at forty-five."

In the end he carried his point. He even brought me to admit that the wife was rather overdone. In my fear of making her attractive I had erred on the other side.

"As you've got her now, she's a laugh," he said. "And the laughs will kill the piece."

So I agreed. A woman of thirty, fairly large, but neatly dressed and obviously one who still had good looks enough if only she knew how to bring them out. But when in a reflective tone he suggested Mabel Grey for the part, instantly I balked again.

"Mabel Grey? She's twenty-two! Gorgeous figure—little feet—cheeks like roses—big blue eyes——"

"Aw forget 'em," he replied. "She can make 'em anything you like. Same way with her face. As for her feet, you're blind, my son—her shoes are so tight she can hardly walk. And as for her figure, ain't there impossible wives enough like her? She aint *petite*—she's big—*de luxe.* And when she lets out her corsets——"

"But she won't!" I almost shouted. "And she won't make up her face and eyes to look the part!"

"Why won't she?" he snapped back at me. "What is she but an unknown kid? Never been in New York till a month ago. And when I tell her, "Mabel—I've got a big star part for you'—she'll do anything for the chance. If she don't I'll know the reason why. And besides," he added casually, "in your first act she's twenty-three. Let her show herself as God made her then, and she'll be meek and fat as a lamb all the way through the rest of the piece."

Rather glumly I agreed that at least we should try Mabel out.

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3.

And in my talk with her that week, my doubts began to drop away. For Mabel was such a radiant kid, so blithely eager to play the part, so grateful to me for choosing her. In a month we were on intimate terms.

"Believe me, Larry, please!" she implored. "I was born in Colorado—I know how big and true to life this piece of yours is—and to put it over I'll do simply anything! Just look at my eyes and mouth and nose, or any other part of me, and tell me what it is you want—and I'll do anything on earth! Only please, please believe in me!"

I took her often out to dine and for long rides on summer evenings. Far up the Sound on a strip of beach she cooked a supper for me one night. And after a delicious meal she lay back upon the sand, scowled reflectively at the stars over her small cigarette, and talked about "our chances"—discussed our play, her faith in it, her knowledge of Colorado life where our man and his impossible wife had met and loved and married. The wife was a cook in a mining camp, and so we talked about cooks for awhile. Very sensibly Mabel demanded to know what it was people thought so comic in cooks. They had the power of life or death over all the rest of us, didn't they? As a little girl in Colorado she had driven about with her father, who was a country doctor; and in lonely mountain cabins, she had seen things that would turn your hair. "Such meals! Such grease! But how could you blame them? Life was a pretty stiff proposition for a woman with children there!" She told of one young widow who to save her baby's life had fetched a cow from the next ranch, tramping twenty-four miles in the rain. She had caught pneumonia and nearly died.

"But she didn't, she lived, and so did her baby. And you know, Larry, the more I think about that wonderful life in the West, the more I feel that such happy endings are the rule. Such women simply cannot fail."

I glanced at her with a sharp suspicion, but she was talking earnestly on.

"And believe me, I have seen enough to make a girl almighty wise. My father died and I had to fight for every inch of the ladder I climbed—at first as a juvenile in stock and then in cheap road companies. You know what that means—what some managers are—especially with a girl like me. I'm not sitting here as a sweet little saint—I went over the line and I had to. And I even wanted to, sometimes. After all, it's the deepest thing in life—and the blood in my veins runs pretty warm. You see, Larry dear, I'm trying my best to be honest with you. No posing—that's me. But I've been pretty decent through it all—decent in the real sense, I mean. And I've tried to be real—and *see* things real."

"Then you're one in a thousand," I said. "I've never yet met a girl on the stage who could see or even care to see one thing in the world but her own little part. Of all the narrow people—with nothing but shop talk, envy, scheming, vanity——"

"Oh fiddlesticks. You know we're not so bad as that." She turned on her elbow in the sand. "Mr. Weary New York Cynic," she smiled, "lift up thine eyes unto the hills —I mean to the mountains in the West—and get a little of my faith. An American actress, like everyone else, is a mixture of pettiness and oceans of good qualities, too—kindness, pluck, generosity and no end of others—bounded on the north, perhaps, by a not very enormous brain, on the east and west by an evening gown as sketchy and transparent as her manager can find any excuse for, and on the south by stockings which he insists must be of silk—and the thinner the better. That's the whole trouble. She's like all other women, poor thing—but her whole body and her soul are so rigged up and shone upon by the calcium that you see her all. And she gets so used to being seen that at moments she forgets her mother's little old red shawl. Otherwise," said Mabel gravely, "she's a perfect lady."

She turned her mischievous eyes on mine.

"To come back to me," she suggested. I started then to tell her that she was different from the rest—but before I had time to get very intense, she cut me off. "Don't start it, Larry—please!" she said. "You're different, too—I mean to me. And I'm just as I said I was—when I let go—and we mustn't now. We've got a big play to put over."

"And after that?"

She was too quick for me.

"You look right out at that ocean!" she cried. I did so. "Now Mr. Hart," said the voice at my side, "I've a little question to ask you. Will you marry me, Larry dear?"

"Mabel, you're acting," I rejoined. She lay back laughing on the sand.

"Oh you poor idiot of a boy—of course I am—and so are you. We can't help it, can we? It's our job, our precious bread and butter."

"Oh damn our bread and butter!"

"Why Larry, how can you speak like that—of our own dear child—I mean our play?"

"Drat the play!"

"Look here, Mr. Author, it strikes me that I'm getting all the good lines in this scene. All you have to say is, 'Drat the play'—and—'Damn our bread and butter.' Larry dear, as a playwright you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

I knelt beside her on the sand.

"Mabel," I said solemnly, "you have asked me to be your husband. But before I trust myself to you, there is one question, dearest, that I feel sure my good old father if he had lived would wish me to ask."

"That's pretty good, Larry," she murmured. "Almost sure to get a laugh."

"This is not a laugh," I said sternly. "My question is this. If you marry me will you keep me? I'm a pretty sensitive little boy——"

"You're six feet two——"

"Never mind if I am! I'm sensitive from head to toe! If you shake me you'll simply ruin my life!"

"But I won't—I'll stay married, you poor darling, just as long as you want me hard enough to make you behave in such a way that I'll keep enjoying being your wife."

I have written enough of this fluff to show how we were getting on. In various cafés in town, Mabel, who loved dancing, appeared in a smart little costume of silk and tulle that matched the blue of her eyes and set off her rather full but ravishing figure, neck and arms. Skirt short, of course, blue dancing slippers laced up high above the ankles. We played our scenes in various moods—now talking gayly of nothing at all, now flirting most outrageously. Again in a warm intimate tone she would speak about our play.

"We'll make it such a great big hit that I'll be here five hundred nights! Five hundred nights! Oh Larry! And so far as I've seen it I love the town. Don't talk to me of wretched old laws to keep its glorious skyscrapers down I wish to God they were twenty times higher—and all its dance music just going like mad! I want everything in it to stay 'way up! And will it? Will it? Or am I just dreaming—and is it because I'm still quite young? Oh Larry, I don't want to get stale! I know what I am, and what I've got in me—what I want to do on the stage, and all I want to get out of life! It's endless—perfectly endless, dear! And so much of it comes from this play of ours—and so much comes from loving you!"

Was Mabel faking? I don't think so. It was not so simple as that. Her feeling for me was like mine for her—we began by acting but grew rapidly more real. Time and again she would face herself and try her best to be on the square, not only with me but with my play. She worked like a dog in rehearsals. On muggy stifling August days she would smile a headache down, and smooth out quarrels that arose and endless hitches here and there. Of a nature warm and exuberant, even though she was working so hard I don't doubt for a minute that in our sprees she let herself go and enjoyed to the full the loving and the being loved—in fact, she went so far at times that enjoyment is too cold a word. We did not wait till the opening night.

"Yes," she said one evening,

"Tonight?"

"Why not?" she answered tensely. There was a little silence.

"Look here, Mabel—I don't care a fig for getting married myself. But how about you? Are you quite sure you really don't? Because if you do, it's so simple," I said. She looked back at me squarely:

"Lawrence Hart—do you take this woman to be your wife—for just so long as you both agree?"

"I do."

"And will you be square with her all the while?"

"I will be."

"Oh you darling boy, how nice it is to be your wife!"

But a few hours later she whispered,

"Remember, Larry dearest, there can't be many nights like this. There's the play, you know, and it's to be made the biggest success you've ever had. All the more because of tonight."

So much for Mabel's honesty. And even with the play itself she was honest from her point of view. For Mabel was an actress. To her the way to build a piece was to make her own role in it strong. And why was it not stronger to let our woman from the West, after grimly watching the wiles of the lady in New York, rise at last in all the glory of her Colorado "zip," wrench her husband loose from the toils and then turn on her rival? "This man is mine! What do you know of loving a man? What do you know of anything real? What do you know of the life we led——" and a whole list of other things. It was absolutely true to life—and so, while being square with the author, the ambitious young actress could secure a Samson-pulling-the-temple down Third Act curtain for herself, and a Fourth Act with her charms restored, which would make her a star for the rest of her days.

To give the details of how it was done, unobtrusively, bit by bit, through the long crowded weeks of rehearsal and later during our month on the road, would take more space than I have here. "What Mabel Did," might well be made a separate little volume describing in a nutshell our American stage today—a glamorous reflection of our hurly-burly life. But because this meandering book of mine is only a string of memories, each one unfinished, incomplete, I shall force myself again to be brief. And briefly, what she did was this: In Act I, by little changes more in the "business" than in the lines, she built the young wife to symbolize the fresh keen vigor of the West. This quality, once planted, kept cropping up in our scenes in New York. Meanwhile the girl I had chosen to play the role of the Easterner, a good looking able sort, found herself in such disaccord both with Mabel and the manager that one day she threw up her part; and her successor was so commonplace, so tame and acquiescent, that it became increasingly hard to make it seem convincing that the husband could prefer such a clod to his dynamic Western wife. And though in rehearsals Mabel seemed to be doing her best to act her part—sulking, rapidly growing fat, hating New York and going about in a continual state of grouch, relieved by shrewd keen bits of irony—every one of them a sure laugh—there was nevertheless a gleam in her eyes that showed she was going to start something soon. In short, the Happy Ending was looming rapidly into view.

As I saw what she was driving at, there were hot discussions, angry times. Again she would promise to do her best. But she simply could not act the part of a woman going dully and impassively to defeat. Or if she could, she wouldn't. The only way to save my story would have been to put her out. And then goodbye to Mabel. And between the play and the girl I probably would have chosen the latter. But I came to no such choice. For after all, she had truth on her side. We're an optimistic country still, bristling with men and women of the kind that are bound to succeed. So I salved my conscience. The new story was as real as the old. Only—it was not so deep. Why is it that tragedy is always deeper than success? Steve, perhaps, could have told me why. But I had no time for him, those days. I was trying desperately to save both my play and my love affair—I was in swift waters now. And because the new story had to be grafted onto the old, there was so much re-writing, twisting and turning to be done, that what we finally produced—for all its apparent truthfulness—was a combination of the two, as shallow and as shrewdly false as that crude formless labor pageant had been deep and fiercely real.

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4.

But I did not see it at the time; and even now as I look back, it is not that which makes we wince. For I have been more interested in living than in writing. I have not followed a writer's career—on the contrary—my poor career has always had to follow me. And it was on this side of the footlights that I now received a jolt.

As I loved this gorgeous youngster, I strained every nerve to help her climb to her place among the tinsel stars, taking for my very own her eagerness and glad belief in the game which she made glorious. Years of success had left me stale. She swept me back into my youth. So together we put over our piece—and our impossible wife, transformed, played to crowded houses. For hundreds of nights she was acclaimed as a great American figure, true symbol of our national rush and scramble. Mabel was a star. But in the months that followed, I saw my vivid fresh young goddess quaff deep of that exhilarating brew which is compounded of the adoration of college youths, the flattery of women reporters, the smiles and wiles of photographers, the hungry eyes of managers, and through it all the joyous din of curtain calls innumerable. She had her own press agent now, a resolute brazen looking lad with pompadour hair so absurdly light that we called him "the Albino." To me he personified the whole ravenous thirsty town. To drain her dry of her freshness he ransacked her early life, her long rides with her father over the mountains to lonely cabins. He even faked a daguerrotype of Mabel as a little girl. He drew on her memories of the West, her years in stock and on the road, hints of various love affairs. And it was all that I could do to keep our own story out of print. For she laughed at my outbursts. At times she would simply overwhelm all efforts at bad temper by the impulsive warmth of her love. Again, as one fellow to another, she would very sensibly ask,

"Oh Larry, now why shouldn't I? Why be a prig and a little fool and refuse to please the public, dear?"

So she blithely scrawled her name to the most awful piffle which Albino Charley wrote on Modern Love, on Suffrage, on Cooking, Christian Science, the Boundless West and so on. She let herself be photographed in all the good old poses, and also with a baby mountain lion in her arms. It had been borrowed from the circus. "Mabel Grey and Her Favorite Pet." She had taken an apartment with one enormous studio room, and there she began to give parties galore. In one of these a film was shown of a dense African jungle, with tigers and lions, at which her guests shot with silver mounted rifles, to the popping of the corks of many bottles of champagne. "Mabel Grey Gives Jungle Shoot." There were other occasions equally dizzy. Invitations to parties of many kinds poured in, and she accepted them all. Why shouldn't she? Here was "zip" and thrill. By these the town was kept "way up." And Mabel dancing was a joy to make the stalest sinner smile. But the pace was fast and furious. She was not only playing every night but working with me on her next play, "Rouge."

"Mabel, for God's sake," I would cry, "why can't you see that to get anywhere you've got to cut these parties out? I've nothing against 'em now and then—but look at your friend Elsie B——. She has made a hit as big as yours, but does she let it turn her head? It's a rare night when little Elsie doesn't go straight home to bed."

"Let her sleep!" snapped Mabel. She kept it up. And even one season left its marks. Not on her looks—she had them still—and they were enhanced by all the filmy lacy stuff, the penciled shadows, paint and curls by which the city's beauty makers their mysterious tricks perform. The change was in the soul of her—restless moods and bursts of temper, endless craving for applause, for something new, then something newer. Her old honesty dropped away, and with it her sense of humor. God help her, she even came to believe the mush Albino Charley wrote.

All this picture, you may say, is that of a man insanely jealous. You are right. But the jealousy was not all on one side. I was still the son of Carrington Hart, with hosts of friends to whom the rumor of my affair with the prize new lady of the year only increased my attractiveness. Hence ominous flashes from Mabel, questions asked with gleaming eyes, and dark threats uttered. But she did not carry them out. I was still the only favored one. And I think she clung to me, not only for the sake of the new play on which we were working, but quite as much because I had been her companion through the dazzling time on which already, so swift was the pace, she looked back as the peak of her youth. She wanted desperately to keep that. I was in Act One and she hated to close it. To put off bringing the curtain down, she exerted herself so ardently that she fooled not only me but herself. The work on our new comedy went particularly well. On the strength of this the old comradeship, and in its wake, the old passion, returned. So we drifted through to the time when "Rouge" was at last completed and the contract for it signed. And then one night in a café, where some idiots were watching us, whispering and smiling, Mabel said impulsively,

"I'm getting rather sick of this—being whispered at, I mean. How about getting married? You spoke of it once—and if you haven't changed your mind I think it would be quite nice and amusing."

"All right. When?"

"Tonight, of course."

"And the license?" I reminded her. She concealed a little yawn and said,

"Oh I guess you can get it, Larry dear. Pay enough to get somebody out of bed, or else let it go until morning. But I want to be married tonight—and I think a church wedding would be nice. I have a little pull I'll work."

She called up a few of her friends, and they became so delightedly busy that within an hour or so Mabel and I were man and wife. So far, so good. But when we emerged from the little church, it seemed as though all the photographers and movie experts in the town were gathered to do their deadly work. I saw the Albino in the crowd, and it came over me in a flash that this impulsive wedding was simply another publicity stunt, which he had carefully worked up to get full advertising value out of me and my family name. There was nothing to do but run the gauntlet, grind one's teeth and so get through the supper party—thank God for the noise. But when we reached her apartment at last, though she flew instantly into my arms and sobbed and begged me to believe that she had known nothing about it at all, would not for worlds, and so on—I said nothing in reply. I was grimly determined to play with her no scene that night. My thoughts went over the headlines and front page pictures to appear on the morrow, and the films. I decided to leave town for awhile. I was suddenly sick of Mabel Grey. The end of our affair had come, and instinctively I tried to get out in time to skip the last big scene.

But she insisted on playing it through. She would not let me get away, she threatened to scream and raise a row, and in hopes of avoiding still more noise I agreed to let her talk it out. This she did in her bedroom. Lights way down, room almost dark. Business of beautiful heaving bosom, filmy garments torn in shreds. She flew from one pose to the next. She played the scene at her dressing table, watching me in the mirror of course—comb savagely tearing at her hair; and she played it on her knees. It was as cheap as cheap could be. Moreover, I was cross and tired. Each moment deepened my disgust. With her the glamor of the town had grown to a gorgeous bubble and burst. In her as in a mirror I saw what had been happening in myself. All freshness and sincerity and honesty gone out of life, together with real faiths and dreams—all made a show of and brought down to a basis of publicity, stale and artificial. In me the change had taken years—in her one year had done the trick.

But she could not see it. Loudly furious, she declared that the little publicity stunt of the evening was none of her planning but something fresh, spontaneous, warm, all in the game of Broadway life. Where was the harm in it, anyhow?

"Oh Mabel," I said wearily, "can't you be honest even now? There was nothing fresh or spontaneous here. It was all a cold-blooded fake from the start. You waited till the new play was finished and the contract signed. Then you let Albino Charley take this whole affair of ours, bring it to a climax tonight and turn that into headlines with a cold cash value. You did it without letting me know, because you knew I wouldn't agree—that in fact it would probably end our affair. You took something in us once fresh and real, and traded it off for a big free 'ad.' And in doing that you showed yourself stale. I don't claim to be any better, my dear—I'm probably staler even than you, because I've been here longer. But so long as there's nothing fresh or real left in the feeling between us now, can't you see that the only way is to drop it?"

In short, disgusted and tired out, instead of being sensible and smoothly ending the affair by falling in with Mabel's whim, and playing the last scene vivid and big right up to the curtain, I stuck to the facts and let it all down—with the result that my young actress wife, by now so beautifully dressed for the part in creamy silk pajamas, became abruptly just plain mad, and with an ugly smile she said,

"All right, dearie, if that's how you want it, I'll make it easy as I can. There are about a thousand would-be co-respondents, and I'll let Albino Charley pick the most promising of the lot—just to let you see how stale I am! And when the thing gets into court, it will be just as far from stale as Charley can make it! Do you get me? There's a hell of a lot of publicity left in this thing yet, my love!"

When later the case came to trial, although I did not appear in court, it was hard to escape the headlines. They rang all the changes upon "His Impossible Wife." The play had become a reality. Mabel was the girl from the West, crude, genuine, warm-blooded, real—whom I, the young New York millionaire, was about to throw aside like a discarded mistress. It was very raw stuff, but they put it across. With the aid of her several lawyers, Mabel worked up skilfully to the big scene where she took the stand and told the story of her young life. And she played it so effectively that it was all my attorney could do, with the help of a sympathetic judge, to hold the jury in line for me. When at last my divorce was granted, one gray-headed old fool of a juror, who had held out in Mabel's favor, laid a trembling hand on her bowed head and said,

"God bless you, little woman!"

"Rouge" was an enormous success.

CHAPTER X

1.

As to the annoyance and disgust of my family through the whole affair, there is no need to dwell on that. They said nothing about it to me. I remember my father's look when I went to him at the start—but he was grimly practical. Would she take money and keep still? She would not. Then he hoped I would leave this to his lawyer and get out of town. I promptly agreed. I was sick of New York—and as Steve had done before me, I came out here to Seven Pines, to think it all over, take stock of my life.

And at first it was not cheerful thinking. I felt stale from head to foot. My wise old Aunt Amelia left me pretty much alone.

"Larry," she said quietly, "there is so much in this affair I wouldn't be apt to understand, that I see no use in talking it over. And anyway I am always so very much more interested in what young people are going to do than in what they have done. You have certainly lived pretty hard. I'm so glad now you've come back home to think it over and find yourself—and get ready to do something better than you've ever done before."

So she left me to myself. Dorothy was away on a visit, and I was glad she was not here. I had not seen her for nearly a year. But one evening soon after I arrived, my young cousin came home unexpectedly; and as she looked in from the hall, at sight of me she gave a little start.

"Oh—why, hello, Larry—nobody told me *you* were here."

Though her voice was natural enough, her expression was so strained that when she had gone up to her room I made up my mind to leave the next day. But in the morning I learned she had gone—"on another visit," her mother said. So again I was left to my thinking.

And this old house where I had been reared began to make its presence felt, by subdued and unobtrusive whisperings and creaking sounds which suddenly took my memory back. Long ago in college days a man had told me I was "psychic"—and he was right to this extent—that sometimes this home of mine, so filled with the presence of my aunt, would seem to speak to me for her, and yet with a personality more masculine and all its own, compounded of the presences of others still remembered here. Like a kind but gossipy old friend, fairly bursting with curiosity, it seemed to listen all intent while I went over my affair—and cheerfully it seemed to say,

"All right, my boy, you've been a fool. But is that anything new in your life? Remember the time you ran away to New York with a drunken horse-dealer? Yes, you have been a mixer and an adventurer, my son; and now you have gone and done it again. It will be well for you some day to stroll down to that old tree in the wood, where a repentant little lad once used to beat himself on the shins."

"But I'm not repentant," I replied. "You miss the point entirely." And I gave a peevish sigh. "But what else should I have expected? A puritanical old house——"

"I am *not* a puritanical old house," came the stiff rejoinder. "I am decidedly modern! In the past, if you had come with any such story of carnal love, you would have got it hot and heavy—and it would have done you good! As it is, being thoroughly up to date, I treat the matter lightly—as a mistake, an escapade, a thing to be a bit ashamed of. And you reply——"

"I'm trying to tell you that instead of being ashamed, on the whole I'm glad I had it! I needed it to open my eyes!"

"Then what's worrying you?"

"What's worrying me is that I've been getting so stale and dry, so spoiled by being popular and by cheap living in New York, that I can no longer get a grip on anything real!"

"Very well, let's go into this thoroughly. Go back through the last twenty years and tell me the story of your life."

With the greatest relish it listened to everything I had to tell.

"Well, young man, if you want to write some exceedingly hectic books and plays, you can sit down and start right in. God knows you have the material—you have crowded forty lifetimes into twenty feverish years. But you have been living on whiskey, and now you had better take the cure. You've been seeing life from an automobile —look at it from a buggy instead. Stay with me for a few years." I made a restless movement. "Oh I doubt if you'll be very bored. There may be sentimental fools who sing of me as Home, Sweet Home; but behind my sweetly simple air I'm a pretty wise old citizen. I am packed full of a hundred years and ready for a hundred more. Through the mortals who come within my walls, all things human and divine sooner or later enter my doors. Abide with me a little while, and from an old American home let us look at what is brewing in this chaotic world today."

Rather ungraciously I agreed. I still wanted to be alone for a time. I got a horse and took long rides along familiar country roads. So several quiet weeks went by.

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2.

And after that, in Steve's home only a few miles away, I found a new companion. With Lucy and Steve I had little in common—or rather, too much. They knew too much, and behind their kind forbearance I knew what they were thinking. But with Tommy it was different. Quite obviously delighted to have his Uncle Larry back, he took me right into his life, depths fresh and radiant and new.

Tommy at the age of twelve was no longer fat but tall and thin, all angles, bone and hard young muscle. His voice was fully as deep as before, and his grave brown eyes as eagerly intent on all the ways and means by which a boy contrives to feed the swiftly changing desires of his lusty body and soul. Tommy's desire to be out of doors was a veritable passion. Although he had been out all day, supper was barely over at night before he was earnestly thinking up "something I gotta do tonight" that would keep him safely out of range of the hated bedtime call. It was "to close my chicken house" or "to bed my pony down." But long after such tasks were accomplished, he would remain out under the harvest moon, prowling like an Indian scout, standing still and listening hard, visiting various secret spots, sniffing vigilantly for skunks. I sniffed one with him one evening—sniffed it to an awful extent.

"Gosh!" whispered Tommy breathlessly. "There's going to be hell tonight!"

We got a lantern from the barn and excitedly inspected the intricate fortifications by which my nephew's hen house and his coops for "baby chickens" were protected from marauders.

"You can't be too careful," Tommy said. "A skunk has a big head on his shoulders. And if he does find a hole to crawl through, he's not like a mink, satisfied with one hen —no sir, he'll suck the blood out of 'em all! I lost seventeen hens and a rooster once, and I'm taking no chances!"

When the defences were found intact, we went on to inspect the skunk trap. This was a barrel so arranged that when a skunk entered to get the bait the barrel tipped up—and there he was! There then remained the question, how to get him somewhere else.

"It's no easy job," said Tommy. "Dad's patients here are nervous people. They come to the country for fresh air—and if it isn't fresh every minute, they can't be contented till I get a licking—although I happen to be the one who gives 'em eggs for breakfast. But I tell you what I do. If I find Mister Skunk in the barrel, I don't pretend to notice him. The least little scare and he'll start right in. So I sneak up and all of a sudden I clap on a good tight-fitting lid. I nail it down, then tip over the barrel and start it rolling down the hill. And it rolls way down to the farm of a man who is sensible about such things."

We came rather cautiously back to the house, and looking through the kitchen window we found it was long after nine o'clock. Whereupon—"so as not to get mother excited"—we fetched a ladder from the barn; and noiselessly mounting to his window, Tommy crept carefully into his room. In a moment he stuck out his head and whispered,

"It might be a pretty good idea to take that ladder back to the barn."

"All right, old boy, I'll see to it."

"Gee, Uncle Larry, I'm glad you're here! Why don't you come and live here?"

I came over often after that. With the money that we earned from eggs and fowls and broilers, ducks and fine big Belgian hares, we climbed into the pony cart and rattled down to the village store; and there we bought the things we needed—a good strong hammer or an ax, a bag of good strong candy, glue, elastic bands for sling-shots, nails, spikes, shingles, fishing hooks, kite string and a food for hens called "Lay or Bust." We stopped at the village smithy and had our faithful pony shod. We drove back home and were late for lunch. We were nearly always late for lunch. There were so many things we had to do. We built a small log cabin far up on the wooded ridge, and on starry autumn nights we went up there with Oberookoff, fried our bacon and eggs and potatoes, and later lay back in the balsam listening to our friend's accounts of the wailing howls of Russian wolves and the blood-curdling conjuries of a village sorcerer he had known.

Long before this I had slipped back into my old place in the family. I was on good terms with Emmy, a shy moon-faced little daughter of nine; and I drew closer to Lucy and Steve. I felt Steve's new attitude toward his son. Surprised and touched to discover Tommy's admiration and love for him, Steve had begun some years before to enter into Tommy's life, and had been my predecessor in many fine adventures here. He it was who had taught the lad to use an axe, to ride and swim. Often they would disappear for a whole day together—and Steve had lain by Tommy's side on that great still momentous night when for the first time in his life the boy had slept out under the stars. So it was through Tommy that Steve and I came together again. I had fallen into the habit of thinking of him as "poor old Steve," the brilliant chap who had lost his chance. Now however by degrees I realized that I was wrong. A good deal heavier in build, with iron gray in his thick hair and more perceptible markings in his powerful sunburned face, I could not miss the impress there of a new grip, a deeper assurance and quiet poise. Steve was just as busy as he had ever been in New York. For the place had grown and its work had changed. "Dad's patients here are nervous people," Tommy had said, and he was right. For Steve was a nerve specialist whose fame was spreading far and wide; and they came from straining feverish towns and cities all over the U. S. A.—twitching jerky specimens or people as inert as logs, still others with obsessions that put a queer light in their eyes.

"Poor people," Oberookoff said. "No wonder they are nearly mad. In cities they have lost their roots. In Russia we have country homes; and though people go to Petersburg they still return to their estates, where they were children, where they know the peasants and their songs and tales, the church, the priest, the sorcerer. But these poor Americans have no homes. In apartment buildings in New York who is there to sing folk songs? Only the elevator boy, and he sits reading a false magazine. There is nothing real. They have no roots. They have lost them in the city life."

In this sweeping deep analysis, he was supported by Aunt Amelia. In fact, the idea was her own. But one day Steve, who had regained his old sense of the irony of things, led them both to a cottage window and gave them a glimpse of a tall lean man who, violently twitching, sat in a chair and glared fiercely at the wall. Plainly here was a victim of the hectic life of towns.

"Poor fellow," breathed Oberookoff.

"Is he from New York?" inquired my aunt.

"No, he's from a ranch in Montana," Steve replied maliciously.

From such widely scattered regions of our country did these people come, that as I look back on them they make a most significant part in the picture I have of our national life as it was when the Great War began—a restless straining heaving mass composed of untold millions struggling upward—dreaming, scheming, each in his rut—a few engrossed in big ideals, like Steve, for human happiness; more reaching out lean strenuous hands for money—and when money came, flinging it blindly here and there. Blind to any real happiness, blind to the discarded past and to the future even then so rapidly looming into view. A nation dragging anchor, breaking from old faiths, restraints and ways of living, crowding into noisy towns and groping madly for the new. A great people in transition and, through its immigration, its commerce and its travel abroad, bound up in a world that was crowding the transformations of ages into a few tumultuous years. There was seething restlessness over the land —and though there were still the millions, on farms, in drowsy little towns, whose lives appeared to be out of the reach of the whirl and rush and pull of the storm so swiftly gathering—in reality it was not so. For the newspapers and magazines, the railroads and the motor cars, the movies and the travelling men, came out from the big cities—and the life of the farms and little towns began to stir with change impending. There was no village in the land in which some restless boy or girl was not dreaming of the cities.

And out of this prodigious whirl, all kinds of people came to Steve. Not only the rich came here to be cured, for he took free patients constantly. Machinists from my father's mills and wealthy brokers from New York came with the same nerve diseases, working girls with the same complaints as the wives and daughters of millionaires. Nerves—nerves! Some had to be kept in bed for weeks, and a few of these poor specimens died. But most of them kept out of doors. Some took tramps or horseback rides, others worked upon the farm. I remember one bank president perched upon a mowing machine and clucking anxiously to his team. I recall a shrewd-looking woman, the society leader of a thriving western town, briskly weeding onions here—and a traction promoter milking cows—and a stout dowager from Detroit calmly but earnestly flying a kite which Tommy had loaned her one hot day. In every conceivable fashion did these mad people try to relax.

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3.

My father often came here to rest; and I began to notice in him a change that made me wince a bit. To me at least he had always shown a vitality inexhaustible, but the limits now began to appear. Steve was his physician as before, and Dad obeyed him anxiously. He did light work out of doors. With Oberookoff becoming good friends, he had tackled that crazy little mill and put it into running shape; and while sawing small logs into firewood, they had long soul-exploring talks. After such days out of doors, he would often come over to Seven Pines. He and I were no longer so far apart. He had grown more liberal in his views, and I less radical in mine; and we came together again on T. R. and the new Progressive Party. Dad had taken Aunt Amelia out to the Chicago convention. She had listened to the speeches there, the impassioned declaration of a new faith in the soul of the nation. She had heard that great assemblage sing "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord"—with a deep crusader's zeal that carried her far back to her youth and the days of the Civil War. And radiant at this justification of her life-long belief, she said,

"There is nothing new in this—I saw it as a little girl. No matter how keen and shrewd and hard the American people may seem to be—deep down in every one of them is a God-given fire that never goes out. And when they are summoned to some great cause, then my dears these people are all at once so wonderful, so ready to lay down their lives, that—oh to me it is like a promise of how the whole world is going to be. Years ago in Chicago I felt this promise in the Fair. I shall never forget to my dying day the White City on those nights in June. I remember saying to myself, 'All cities some day will be like this.' And now again out there in the West I have seen the vision. New things are stirring. Men—and, thank Heaven, women, too—are firmly making up their minds that all that is ugly and selfish and mean in our politics and business life and in our smoky factory towns shall be cleared away—that every boy and girl in the land shall be given a good fair start—and be brought up with such ideals that the nation they shall build at last——" She paused for a moment, looked down at her hands which were locked together in her lap, and ended in a reverent tone, "It shall be such a nation that to all the weary groping peoples of the earth, my dears, it shall at last have earned from its Master the right to tell them, 'Follow me'."

I remember that evening vividly still. My father was here. We were sitting together in this room where I am writing these memories down; and where, when at last I reach the end, I shall try—I can feel it in my bones—to take stock of our part in the vast struggle which to some seems ended, to others only just begun. Have we advanced one step on the road to Aunt Amelia's promised land? Have we made it all worth while? For it cost some twenty million young men their lives or their limbs or their eyes, you know. And though you may lay us aside with pensions or in soldiers' homes while you go on in the same old way, as though there had never been any war, putting all those big ideals of service and devotion out of sight upon a shelf, while in your business or profession or your lucrative plumber's job you join in the merry scramble for all the money you can get—then, if I read the times aright, you or your children will come to a crash such as no country but Russia has seen.

Oh, what a solemn book, you may say. But it is solemn to be blind—to have the whole distracting panorama of today wiped out of your view, and so be able to look back on what you have seen of your country's life, and a great war and a great revolution. The cause of this brief outburst was that "God-given fire" in which my brave old aunt believed, and which was soon so amazingly to burst into a mighty flame. And as my story now draws near to those great winds that swept the world, looking back to the days on the eve of the storm two American figures stand out in my mind. One was Aunt Amelia, speaking her faith in the soul of the nation; the other was my father, watching her affectionately with a look half sad upon his face, as though he were thinking of his life and all the other lives he had known, in nearly half a century of such money-grabbing as the world has never seen, and were saying,

"What a damned pity America is not like that."

Which one was right? My life of late had not been of a kind to foster illusions. My father's view now seemed to me close to the grim reality. And though like him I could be stirred of an evening by an old woman's dream, my faith in the Progressive Party was built largely on the fact that so many of its leaders were men of my father's kind—liberal, broad-minded, but with their feet on solid earth. For I had reached a stage in life where I was betwixt and between. As I drew close to forty, I felt myself both young and old, now one and now the other. Could I ever again be swept off my feet by any tremendous human appeal? In some moods, yes—in others, no. Would I ever write anything really worth while? Again hopes, doubt, uncertainty. For although I did write several plays, and one at least, The Nerve Farm, was a better piece of work than anything I had done before—I was still blindly feeling about for a grip on the deeper realities; still groping, as my country was. I saw the Progressive Party fail to hold together; I saw it crumble and go down. And it seemed as though all the social forces I had felt gathering in my youth as if for some achievement world-wide, were scattering now, grown old and stale and utterly impotent to control the surging rush of these modern times. I became almost a fatalist.

. . . .

4.

But I was not always so, for in my memories of that time there is one great vivid picture —which came to me through Dorothy. Though never quite the same with me as she had been in the years before my luckless love affair, my cousin was again my friend; and I welcomed this the more because she still kept her old eagerness for life and new experience. The last few years of dashing about had left her still determined to find a job and settle down. Vigorously she protested against my fatalistic mood.

"Larry," she cried, "you are growing old! Without making the slightest effort to stop it, cooped up here in the country, you're drifting straight into middle age! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

And she liked to drag me off with her on little excursions into scenes in which, with very little said, her buoyancy, so warm and deep, could overwhelm my discouragment—now to town for a concert in Carnegie Hall upon a Beethoven evening; and again up to the Polo Grounds, for she was the only girl I have ever had the luck to know who really loved a baseball game. But our most successful time was the Saturday in April, 1914, when Dorothy persuaded me to go with her again to Ellis Island, to the immense red building there through which in the years gone by men, women and children by millions had pressed forward hungrily with a passion of hope in their eyes. So deep and so tumultuous, so fresh and filled with the vigor of life, was that passion in those immigrants, that I had gone there in the past as to some giant fountain of youth. And now with Dorothy once again I came under the spell of what they called "a big day" on the Island.

Out of the barges that had brought them from the ocean liners, they were pouring onto the dock, gathering in two long lines, and crowding, pressing eagerly on. Hope in the strange old visage of a white-bearded giant, hope in the excited face of a young girl before him, hope in the stout manfulness of the queer little boy by her side who lugged a heavy sack on his shoulders. Hope in the very evident fact that these people had burnt their bridges, had brought all their worldly goods along, not only bags and satchels but their pillows and their bedding in big bulging packages. Hope in the very clothes they wore, for this was gala attire.

"Oh Larry, just look at that lovely old shawl!"

And Dorothy kept pointing out the kerchiefs and the streaming scarfs, the skirts and bodices, jackets and vests. What a crude rich medley of purples and greens and reds and blues! All faces were impatiently turned to the gates that led into the building.

"What is that man in uniform up to?" they appeared to be asking.

The army surgeon by our side held a small stick in his hand, and with this stick and a finger he deftly rolled up eyelids. "Here's another one. Look," he would say, and on the underside of a lid he would show us the red lines of trachoma. On the backs of the afflicted he would mark with a piece of chalk; and each of them, unaware of his fate, would go blinking, laughing, hurrying on. Other officials were waiting ahead, and there were searching looks, quick prods, in the business of weeding out the diseased. In a dozen different tongues, they kept repeating,

"Don't get frightened!"

For here, while the main throng poured on up a long steep flight of stairs, those suspected of being unfit were pushed and jerked and thrown to one side. "What brutal officials!" Dorothy cried. But these men had to handle ten thousand people in a day, as cowboys in a human herd. And the herd grew frenzied here, with shrieks and wails of wild distress as friends and relations were torn apart.

Watching our chance we slipped by an official, and with the more fortunate ones we went quickly up the stairs into the immense main hall. There was something terrible in the power of this surging throng—in the coarse heavy faces, the quiver of muscles and the pressure of big limbs, the rough eagerness of voices that spoke in a clamor of many tongues. "Look! Quick!" my cousin whispered. Close by us in its mother's arms a child with scared wide-open eyes stared fixedly up at the stars and stripes of the flag which hung high over all. The crowd was constantly being herded into twenty-two long lanes divided by steel fences. We passed along the side of the hall and came to the head of one of these lanes, where at a high desk sat an inspector writing busily in a huge book, one of thousands of such books stacked away in dusty rooms, in which are recorded year by year the strange names of these inpouring recruits to a strangely growing American race. An interpreter was helping him decide on each new candidate. Fit or unfit to be one of us?

"How much money have you got?" The answers came in paper bills, in silver, gold or copper coins, in rubles, lira, francs and marks, in kronen, guilders, öra.

"Where are you from?" In answer, rough voices uttered the names of sombre ancient cities and towns, villages on rocky coasts, hamlets perched in mountains or far out on Russian steppes.

"Where are you going?" The replies sent one's mind and fancy leaping over the new world. And as they were admitted here, with sudden laughter and loud cries, quick shouldering of heavy bags and gathering of children, off they went, most of them running pell mell.

"Don't forget your luggage!" was shouted at them from all sides. Those who were not carrying their belongings in their hands must pick out trunks and bags and boxes in the baggage room below. Beside it, a long waiting room was packed and crammed with people. Through the high windows a setting sun painted golden the dust in the air. The odors grew heavy and stifling. Children lay dead asleep on the floor, babies everywhere rolled underfoot. The talking, shouting and laughing filled the whole place with a steady roar, and endlessly various parts of the throng would surge towards the open baggage room door. But the room inside was already full; and so in the doorway, throwing them back, stood a doughty little official with broad stocky shoulders and black moustache. He was French, but he talked many languages.

"Ze towair of Babelle, c'est moi!" he shouted gayly into our ears. "I have stood in thees place eleven year! Regardez donc, I am still alive! Booh!" he cried to a raging old woman who charged down upon him. He snapped his fingers in her face. "You are a writair? Shut your eyes! Write anything you can imagine, monsieur! For if it has not happened here already it will do so! They are mad! These people are insane! They have been out of bed since two in the morning. The floor, it is tipping under their feet. They have had no food, and they have been pushed! So!" And he sent an indignant Swede staggering back into the crowd. "They have been asked each moment questions that to them seemed utterly mad! And to their own questions nobody replies! Bah!" he shouted to three small Italians who were clamoring in his ears. He clapped his hands and winked at them impressively; then he turned back with a shrug:

"But they are courageous people, madame!" he declared to Dorothy. "To sell all you have and go to a world you have heard is full of frightful Indians! But they come! They are like that! Then why keep one of them out of your land? If they have diseases what does it matter? Have you not diseases waiting for them in your slums? If they have not all their legs and arms, what does it matter? Have you not the Peetsburg mills waiting to kill them? Quoi donc?" he screamed to a dusky mother who rushed up with a brood of children.

"Ah! It is Armenian!" He talked to her hard and fast in her tongue. "You see? She has lost both her ticket and money! It is somewhere on the floor!"

"Oh but can't anything be done? Can't it be found?" cried Dorothy.

"Can it be found? Can the ocean be asked to step to one side while we look upon the bottom, madame?"

Both hands pressed to her temples, the thin woman moaning rushed away.

"I tell you I propose to find that woman's money!" my cousin exclaimed; and she darted away into he crowd. I followed, but as I seized her arm she gave a little scream of joy and dived down into the mob. There were the tickets and money, quite safe—pinned tight to the small pantaloons of the woman's oldest boy! She had forgotten! At sight of them now the immigrant mother fell on her knees and hugged my cousin's skirt in a frenzy. And while she and Dorothy happily cried, the Frenchman turned to me with a shrug that almost lifted him from the floor.

"Did I not tell you? Quite insane! . . . But let them in!" he continued. "With their children let them into your land! For they shall grow up and make a new life! Let them forget, let them start again! I have no use for things of the past, or books or creeds that are behind! Or drinks! I mix my own, monsieur! Let all these people mix their own! They will go up or they will go down, but they will have new lives, monsieur!"

Before we left the Island we went back to the main hall, climbed to the visitors' gallery and stood a moment looking down. A new multitude pressed forward; the human river still flowed on. And as we watched that field of colors, felt all those excited hopes rising to the flag above, the hand of my companion tightened slowly on my arm, in a manner that reminded me of the labor pageant years before. And Dorothy's lips were tight compressed; on her face was a smile that was half of pain. For here was one of the grandest sights that we had seen or would ever see; part of the endless throng of millions who from all corners of Europe, afoot and in wagons, on trains and ships, day and night on land and sea kept coming, coming through the years. . . . A faint shrill little laugh rose out of it all. It came from a chubby red-jacketed urchin perched on the broad shoulder of a sturdy gray old man. The boy was pulling his grandfather's ear. The latter looked up with a quick smile, and then as the long dense line moved forward just a step, he turned his face to the gate ahead.

"How much money have you got? Where are you from? Where are you going?"

"To the mills and factories, the tenements, the crowded streets, the docks, the railroads and the mines, the prairies and the mountains. We will do the rough work of your land. And some will be killed and all will die. But our children's children and yours will be friends."

. . . .

5.

My cousin was not the only one who held me back from middle age. My old companion, Tommy McCrea, was growing at an astonishing speed; and his deep voice was beginning to change, jumping from bass to high falsetto. But he was the same eager lovable kid who had pulled me out of my former gloom; and his fresh new attack on life was as keen a joy to me as before. I took him on little trips to New York, to the Hippodrome, the Aquarium, and now and then to a game at New Haven. Already Tommy was "strong for Yale." But now, in the summer of 1914, the atmosphere of Tommy's home grew pregnant with the consciousness of a great event about to happen. He was going away to school. In June he had completed his course in the village school nearby; and as the only available high school in the neighborhood appeared to be a poor affair, his mother had reluctantly decided to send the boy away. Poor Tommy took the news very hard. He loved the life in this home in the hills and begged her to let him stay. Gone were all his dreams of Yale.

"I've got all the educating I need out of regular classes," he declared. "I want to be a farmer."

"Then," said Lucy cheerfully, "you must go to an agricultural college."

At this he discarded a farmer's career, and in the weeks that followed he announced one ambition after another. He wanted to be a carpenter, an "expert saw-mill manager," a veterinary doctor, a "chauffeur for nervous people." In brief, he put up a plucky fight—and when at last he knew he was beaten, it was with a grim fortitude that he faced the unknown world ahead. He kept his troubles to himself. But when I came out in July, in the welcome that he gave me there was an anxious eagerness that led to some long serious talks, in which I described my own days at school and gave a deal of sage advice. As he listened, his brown eyes at times gleamed with anticipations, but again an exceedingly forlorn and homesick look crept into them.

"It's pretty tough to be fourteen," said poor old Tommy gruffly. "An it's worse than that. I look sixteen. I'm so darned tall."

He had always been proud of his height before; he had carefully measured himself as he grew. But now in the evenings there came times when this ungainly big little boy, all tanned and freckled and hardened and scarred by the out of door life that he loved, would linger awkwardly over his goodnight to his mother; and it was hard for Lucy then to stick to her plan for him.

Toward the end of July, one evening we motored over to Seven Pines. Dorothy was on a visit out west, but Ed had arrived with his wife and children, and after supper there was a big time. For remembering that hilarious party nearly twenty years before, I had fixed up some tennis balls with phosphorous. In the deepening dark, luminous they flew back and forth; and the game was fast and furious, with piercing cries and yowls of glee from Tommy and his cousins.

It was interrupted for a time by the arrival of my father. He had come over from his mills to give us a rumor he had heard of impending trouble overseas. Austria and Serbia. An ultimatum—perhaps a war. It did not seem very ominous. Dad saw the chance of complications, but it was so far away. Still, the word "War" had a magic sound. It brought Tommy and his cousins close about us listening hard. How potent was race feeling in these sensible modern times? My father thought it was still pretty strong; he cited the race quarrels and brawls among the workers in his mills. I replied with a picture of Ellis Island as Dorothy and I had seen it only a few months before. In that host of immigrants, face feeling had seemed small indeed, lost in the gigantic hope for happier and more prosperous lives. In this my aunt supported me, and between us we soon carried the day. In a half an hour the war was over and the tennis game went on.

But on the way home that evening, Tommy sat beside me; and it soon grew plain that he had plunged into one of the thinking spells which he had often in these days. I asked him what it was about.

"Ellis Island," he replied, and his voice had a solemn tone. "I went there once with Aunt Dorothy, too—and I got a queer new feeling there—never had it before." He paused, then added slowly, "I get exactly the same kind—of a feeling now—when I think about school."

Casually I dropped my hand upon his bony shoulder; I drew him a bit closer, and we talked of school for a time—until the spell was over.

But after I had gone to bed, the picture came again to me. Half waking and half in my dream, I saw again that human sea tumultuous with bobbing heads and quick excited gestures, bright vivid colors everywhere; I heard that harsh and thrilling roar making the very air alive with hopes and fears, uncertainties—the feelings Tommy had about school. I had again the consciousness of countless places left behind—old world cities, ancient towns and bleak little villages—with grim oppression, hopeless toil, heavy taxes and the loss of sons forced into conscript armies. I felt again the deep tremendous passion of hope in the new free world. And in my sleep I dreamed that night, in the most outlandish dazzling ways, of how in a world of the future this hope of all peoples would be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XI

1.

In the next few years, I have no doubt, there will be Cook's tours innumerable to European battlefields; and this will be called "Seeing the War." But the blinding vast tornado, with the deep changes that it wrought, will really not be seen at all till a generation or two have gone and other turbulent events have taken place upon the earth. God pity the poor devils who have to write its history now.

But while I have been working in this room alone at night, gradually I have grown aware of the presence close about me of many silent monitors, who seem to ask, "How honestly can this American friend of ours write about his country?" They are men I knew in Germany, in France and England, Russia—meeting them along the path my own little life made through the war. And they have come so close to me that almost imperceptibly I have found myself writing for them. We have been a strange little group in this room—some of us rich and others poor; some of us warm and comfortable, others frozen and half starved; some of us living, others dead—who together have tried to look back through the war into the long years behind. We have taken up my story first; and though it is not finished yet, it is the turn of these others now. More and more they will come in. I wish I had known them better and could set down their full stories here; but our meetings were so brief, in the midst of such exciting scenes, that I have the merest fragments. These I shall piece together, and in the coming chapters try to confine my memories to my meetings with these men, and to the way that some of them have affected my own life and the lives of other people already familiar in this book.

. . . .

2.

The war at first seemed far away. I was still with Steve and Lucy in their home in the Connecticut hills—one of millions of those quiet spots, scattered all over the face of the globe, into which the great winds in their rising sent the merest breath of alarm. One could picture such scenes innumerable—the stopping of the daily train at a lonely jungle station down in the heart of Africa, the meeting of two caravans on a silent desert of the East. . . . I remember a lovely afternoon on a terrace of the hillside. Under the trees before the house some patients were discussing whether England would go in. One was reading aloud from a paper. He finished and the voices grew animated for a time. Then a portly old citizen glanced at his watch. It was time for him to work in the garden. He had his nerves to think about. After his departure the discussion was renewed. A tall thin manufacturer of picture post cards, from Detroit, was in a pitiable state. The poor man had come here for a rest, but there was little rest in his anxious face. The picture post card business was international, he explained, and the war would play the mischief with—but here our attention was drawn from his plight to that of a large florid dame who from hour to hour was working up a fine case of nerves. Her daughter with a chaperon was over in Hanover studying German. The German spoken in Hanover, she tearfully explained to us, was supposed to be the very best and purest in the world. Oh dear! What was happening to the poor girl now? A quiet wiry little man, whose hair was gray at forty, kept telling her not to worry. He seemed the most unconcerned of the group, He was a broker in New

York. Things were very wild on the market and he was leaving to go back. Presently his car came up and his luggage was brought out from the house. He said goodbye to the people there, then strolled to his car and got into it. We watched it slide heavily down the hill. In the next three years, as I happened to learn, this chap made several million dollars. Later he was killed in France.

Aunt Amelia came over for supper that night. She wanted to get the latest news and "talk it over thoroughly." She was deeply disturbed and indignant about it. "A perfectly awful butchery, without rhyme or reason!" she declared. She spoke of the war she had seen as a girl and recounted some of the horrors—the price. That had at least been worth the price; a great ideal had been at stake. But what this terrible struggle was for she could not for the life of her make out.

"If it does come about," she said, "there is just one thing for us to do—keep perfectly friendly to both sides and help bring peace as soon as we can. Larry," she demanded, "what do those socialist friends of yours mean by not putting a stop to this? I should think they would be ashamed to look each other in the face! After all they have said about brotherhood—and the rights of the common people! The common people don't want this war——"

"They're beginning to," I said, and I read to her descriptions of surging crowds in city streets, and a million little village groups of men excitedly talking, talking, singing patriotic songs. . . . Aunt Amelia rose to leave.

"I am going home," she said solemnly, "to thank God we are out of this!"

I went over to stay with her for a while, for Dorothy was still out west. The next afternoon I motored over to my father's mills, and found him very busy there.

Work had been thrown into confusion by the unexpected loss of several hundred workingmen—Hungarians, Poles, Bohemians, Germans, Scotch and English, leaving now by every train. With a grim smile Dad said to me, "This seems to be the answer to that socialist bugaboo. Here were these fellows a few days ago thinking of nothing but hours and wages—how to give the least possible service for the highest possible pay. But look at 'em now. It's a miracle." An uncertain expression crept over his face. "Not that I like it—understand. I tell you this war is letting loose more than most people have any idea of."

"Yes," I said. All through those days I had had a sense of the solid earth heaving under me. But when that night I went to the station and stood there while a train pulled out, with a score of young workingmen shouting goodbyes, while their women and children waved and cheered and some of them cried—I felt the first big tug of the war.

"I'll have to get over and see it," I thought; and at once I began to plan for the trip. No doubt my old paper would send me. The only real difficulty was time. The fighting no doubt would be over by Christmas, and I had a play which was just about to go into rehearsal. Perhaps I could hurry it a bit. The only snag was my fourth act. I decided to tackle that at once. And so for the next day or two I shut myself up at Seven Pines and wrestled with my heroine.

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3.

And then the distant war abroad struck into our family.

Aunt Amelia came up to my room, and with a sharp resolute effort to keep her trembling voice in control, she read a special delivery letter that had just arrived. Dorothy had been visiting the Colorado cousin in whose little mining town I had gathered the material long ago for "Underground." There she had met again my old friend Max Sonfeldt, whose acquaintance she had made on the opening night of my play in New York. Since then, while in my giddy career I had leaped about from pillar to post, Sonfeldt had gone steadily on with his one idea, his dogged crusade against the deadly gases in American mines and mills. Largely through his efforts the lives of thousands had been saved. And the deep sincerity of the man, that had kept him a lonely figure traveling all over the land, had evidently made its appeal to my impulsive warm hearted young cousin, who treasured still the memory of her own industrial work and was eager now, she wrote, "to stop this eternal gadding about and try to make my life really count." She went on to speak of his big ideals, his kindliness, "his pathetic delight in finding somebody who treated him as a man with a life of his own, something more than a chemical engineer." He had had almost no women friends. She had found him hungry to talk with her of German music, which he loved. They had that in common, and a whole lot of other things. There was more in the letter that I forget. It came down to this—that because he had saved thousands of lives—"with barely any recognition"—and yet had had no life of his own, and was now suddenly called back home to his Fatherland, perhaps to die—this queer affair had suddenly come to a swift dramatic climax which had swept her off her feet. He had proposed—she had spent a sleepless night deciding—then had found she loved him and was "too happy for any words." They had already started east and would reach home on the following day, stop just long enough to be married, and then sail for Germany!

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! I had never realized till now what Dorothy had meant to me, and it came over me in a flash that I was responsible for this. I had given her those ideas; it was through me she had met this man. Instantly I forgot his good points. What an infernally selfish brute to want to take her over there!

"How can she be in love with him? I don't believe she is!" I cried.

"Oh Larry," said my distracted aunt, "the older I get the less I'm surprised at the marriages that do take place!"

Together we tried to picture Dorothy living in Berlin—but all Europe to our eyes went suddenly under clouds of smoke from which was heard the roar of guns. She had been such a warm blithe lovable girl, and such an intimate part of this house. It was as though the long arm of the war were suddenly reaching down into the very foundation stones of this peaceable old building, making it quiver with alarm. Gone was Aunt Amelia's hope of our keeping friendly to both sides—for already this news had fanned into flame the vague instinctive feelings that had been in me from the start against the German side of it. I had never been to Germany—knew very little about it, in fact—but now I began to inveigh against the entire Teuton race, their pig-headed ways, their intolerance. Then noticing the anxiety in Aunt Amelia's restless eyes, I grew grimly practical.

"We must nip this thing right in the bud. You must stop her," I declared. "She won't marry without your consent——"

"Larry," said Aunt Amelia sharply, "when you're old as I am, I hope you will have succeeded in getting a little American breadth of view and a sense of the rights of others! Dorothy's marriage is *her* affair! She's not a child—she's twenty-nine!"

"You mean to say you won't even——"

"Talk to her? Of course I will! But if she really loves the man and feels it's her duty and her choice to go with him, then most certainly I shall give her my consent! And help her—make it easier!" Again with a quick anxious frown she seemed to be trying to picture Dorothy over there in Berlin. She gave it up and came back to the present: "The first thing is to do as she asks in her letter—arrange about the license. I wish you would attend to that."

I agreed and went to Steve's father; and with the old minister I arranged for the marriage I hoped would not take place. Meanwhile Steve and Lucy had been summoned to Seven Pines. From every angle we discussed Dorothy's wild decision and ways and means to induce her to change it. If she insisted on marrying, at least we hoped to keep her here.

"How about her passport?" said Steve. "The chances are she can't get it in time to go with the Dutchman anyhow."

"You don't know him," I gloomily answered. "These Germans think of everything."

And in fact, when the couple arrived, it developed he had seen to that.

Dorothy seemed to me strikingly changed. Though she looked older, stronger, with a determined set expression—she was plainly disturbed and excited, and trying bravely to fight down the dread with which she faced the unknown. In the hall she drew me aside, and with a swift appealing flash in her vivid blue eyes she whispered,

"Remember, Larry dearest, I'm counting on you to see me through! Help me with mother—with them all! And be friends with Max! I'm counting on you!"

"Oh, Dorothy! Are you sure of this?" Before she could answer, her mother was there. She went up to her mother's room; and when they emerged from that long talk the eyes of both were suspiciously bright. Aunt Amelia, having argued in vain, was so resolute in her efforts to show Dorothy we were back of her still, and to make this day "a happy time," that we all tried to fall in with her wishes. With a busy obvious cheerfulness we were making the best of it now. As I welcomed Sonfeldt into the family—rather awkwardly calling him "Max"—I told myself I had been unfair. Here was a man whose life so far certainly put my own to shame. "How she must compare us," I could not help thinking bitterly. But I threw it off. Could he make her happy? "That's none of my business! Her mind is made up, and I've got to help her put this through! . . . What a decent looking chap he is!"

Since I had last seen him, although his slender figure looked no older than before, grayish streaks had come in his hair, and his thin dark sensitive face looked more intense, more deeply lined. In his eager smile, his kindly eyes, I could see he was doing his best to be friendly. But he was in an unsettled state. One moment he would anxiously try to make us feel that he realized how hard it was for a girl to be torn away from her home; and awkwardly and earnestly he would speak of his love for Dorothy. Then abruptly his face would contract and he would grow as anxiously absorbed in the effort to make us see that his Fatherland was in the right. He was talking now to Steve and me, for the women had gone with Dorothy upstairs to help in her packing. He assured us that the war would be brief.

"A few weeks—months at most," he said. Then he looked up with a quick smile. "I want you fellows to understand how we Germans feel. Just think of my case. One week ago I was a man doing all that he could to save human life. Now I shall work as hard to destroy it. Why, you may ask—and I reply, it is because it must be so. Until there is order in the world, war will continue to occur. And there is still such confusion in these blind industrial days, that if you are honest you must admit that the facts of peace are perhaps as ugly as those of war. In your industries over five hundred thousand are either killed or injured or badly poisoned every year. Peace has its bitter passions, too. Not only here but in Europe, strikes break out and every year they have become more ominous. And peace develops selfishness—men whose only aim in life is to get money for themselves. For their country they are not ready to make the smallest sacrifice. But in war these very men will soon be so profoundly changed that they will cheerfully give their lives. For while in peace their bodies have grown soft, their spirits small, in war they are given strength and courage and devotion to ideals. They are taught cooperation."

"They are taught blind obedience, too," I retorted. "All the independence in a man is rooted out. In your country that is so, even in time of peace, I hear. You have no democracy." His face lit up.

"One moment!" he cried. "Have you any real democracy here?"

"We think we have!"

"But do you know what democracy really means?"

"We think we do!"

"Hold on, Larry," Steve put in, for I was getting decidedly warm. "Look here—Max," he said to the German, "can't you fellows understand that it's just by taking such a tone you antagonize us over here?"

"Please! I don't mean to antagonize!" The man's dark sensitive quivering face was strained and eager again in appeal. "God knows we want you for our friends—and there is much that is wonderful and splendid in your country! But have you real democracy?" In spite of himself he returned to his point. "Do the people—all the people—really rule America? No! They will even laugh and tell you themselves, 'Our politics are rotten!' When they say Democracy they mean Individual Liberty! All that every American asks is that his government let him alone—in the making of money for himself, regardless of the good of all. And this is no longer possible! To allow him his freedom is the same as to permit one little cog or piston in some great machine to jump out of place and do as it likes—the result is instant chaos! And so I say you have your choice. You must either follow Germany and advance with civilization—which means that every one of you must become a willing cog in your national machine—or else you must follow Tolstoi back into a peasant's hut."

"Give me Russia!" I put in, but he did not hear me. He stopped abruptly, controlled himself and went on with a deepening earnestness:

"But I would not have you think me blind to the good in other countries. I have no use for what some fools are preaching now in Germany. As every scientist should be, I am an internationalist. The good of all humanity, the world-wide brotherhood, is my goal. But what is the only practical plan for assuring such a peace of the world? If you honestly face the facts, the first step is a group of nations strong enough to control the rest. Only so can we avoid the two big perils confronting mankind. One is the deepening menace of revolution from below. The other is the danger that the multitudes in the East will rise united under Japan and sweep west like the Huns of old. Against these two big dangers, in Germany at least we saw that the only practical safeguard lay in a close union between the three most powerful nations—the German and British Empires and your great United States. We could have sat around one table and controlled the rest of the earth. And the reason why we Germans feel so bitter against England now, is that she has destroyed the chance of that immense alliance. She has betrayed not only us but the entire civilized world! Dearly she will pay for her crime! And in her ruin men will learn that individual liberty, in the narrow British sense, has become a thing of the past! For her system—every man for himself—is so rotten to the core, that she will blunder to her doom! She can by no possible chance prevail against the sure scientific cooperation which is ours!"

As he talked on, his face grew pale. To my biting interjections he paid little or no heed. So engrossed had he become in his defence of the Fatherland, he did not even notice that Dorothy and her mother and Lucy had come into the room and were sitting motionless there. The atmosphere of this quiet room, long so familiar to us all, had filled with an emotional tensity it had never known—as though all the bitter passions of Europe, and the quarrels ages old, were crowding hotly, fiercely in. I looked at Aunt Amelia. Her alert and anxious eyes, now turning to the German and now to her daughter's face, revealed to me her desperate effort to think clearly, quickly, to grasp it all and understand—not Germany's purpose in the war but Dorothy's life in Germany. What chance of safety, happiness? I could see a wave of bewilderment sweep over her. What a bridegroom! "Has he completely forgotten his bride?" she seemed to demand indignantly. Steve's father appeared in the doorway, with his Bible in his hand. And after one quick look of dismay from him to the German talking on, she rose and said in a trembling voice which tried to be brisk and cheerful,

"This is deeply, deeply interesting. But I think we had better leave it now—at least for a few moments—Max—and think about getting married, my dears,"

He looked up in a startled fashion, as though he had been far away. Then he smiled, and with a drop in his voice said quietly,

"Yes—you are quite right."

What a very foreign foreigner. Did Dorothy feel what we were thinking? Probably. When the wedding was over she turned quickly to her mother and hugged her tight without a word. But soon she was talking rapidly, and in the hour that remained she was so desperately eager to have us like her husband, that again we were all doing our best.

"He does love her," I told myself. "He loves her in his German way. And though I don't like his way I've got to make up my mind to this and do as she says—be friends with him."

I got on with him better now. I could feel her closely watching us, while she talked with Lucy and Steve; and once more before she left she managed to get me alone for a moment.

"Will you come to Germany, Larry? You've said you were going abroad for your paper. Won't you come to Germany, too?"

"Yes—I'll come—and as soon as the war is over, you must come back. We want you here—both you and Max." At that she gripped my hand very hard and whispered,

"Thank you, Larry!"

I went with her mother the next day to the boat to see them off. As we stood with them on the dock, by our side a group of Germans were discussing their chances of getting safely through the blockade. Two of them had wives who were obviously Americans. And there came to me a disturbing sense of the countless ties of birth and marriage by which we were bound to the nations at war. Then sharply I forgot all that and supported my aunt in her brave attempt to smile and make the best of this. Just before the last goodbyes, I heard her say to Dorothy:

"I'm sure you will be happy, dear—true to the best that is in you—and to the wonderful country which is still your home, you know."

. . . .

4.

Two weeks later a cable announced that Dorothy and her husband had landed safely in Holland. But no letter reached us for nearly two months after that. Meanwhile my play had been produced, and I had arranged to go abroad as a special correspondent. I planned to sail in a fortnight now, and being pretty well worn out I came back for a week to Seven Pines. Over at my sister's home two familiar figures were gone. Tommy was away at school; and immersed in the importance of his first great adventure, he wrote frequent letters home, in moods now homesick and forlorn, now gaily filled with school-boy slang or solemnly self-conscious. For him the war was far away. Not so with Oberookoff. In a highly emotional state he had already started back to Russia. He had not meant to go at first, but one day he had received a shock in a letter from his mother. From the village where she was teaching school, she wrote of the resistless tides of patriotic fervor sweeping Holy Russia. She called upon her son to come home. And after a frenzy of packing, excited talk of great ideals, tears at leaving, last goodbyes, Oberookoff with his steel-bound trunk had gone forth to war in a Ford, courageously smiling and waving his hand.

I could feel that Aunt Amelia, beneath her resolute cheerfulness, was having a terribly difficult time. The blatant arrogance of Berlin and the savage work in Belgium were having their effect on her; but meanwhile a long letter from Dorothy had just arrived, anxiously pleading the German cause, describing the devotion that had swept away all pettiness and made life wonderful in Berlin. "If you could only see the women here!"

"Oh Larry," Aunt Amelia said, "I know that she is writing me the truth exactly as she sees it. That is just the most awful part of this war. On each side they are so sure they are right that it's driving the whole world insane! It's awful enough to see one side. But both sides—both together!"

Both together had entered her house. Already she began to show the signs of the strain upon her. What were the darkening years to bring? By instinct she still clung to her faith. Somehow it would work out for the best. In the meantime, how to help her daughter? I had told her of my promise to go to Germany while abroad, and already she was giving me messages for Dorothy. I was almost ready now. And as the last days went by more and more the attention of the family centered on me.

But again the unexpected happened. Steve in his secluded nook, engrossed in work with his patients, had found but little time for the war. But one balmy afternoon, while he and I were having a quiet smoke out under the trees, Lucy came hurrying from the house and said that someone in New York wanted him on the telephone. And after he had left us, she confided to me her plan. For nine years Steve had stuck to this work; and to continue in this rut without ever getting any change was mighty bad for any man, especially a scientist. So with her old friend, Bannard, and also with our father, both of whom had influence in the American Red Cross, she had worked for an appointment. . . . At this moment Steve came back, looking cross and worried.

"What's the matter, dear?" she asked.

"The matter is," her husband growled, "that Bannard wants me to take charge of one of our Red Cross units abroad—in Germany! Of all places! It seems the fellow they sent over first is sick and wants to be recalled. Bannard tried to bulldoze me into getting ready to start in a week! The man's crazy and I told him so!"

"What?" cried Lucy in alarm. He threw an angry look at her.

"This is *your* little party," he declared. "When I said I wouldn't think of it, he replied that he wouldn't take a refusal till I'd spoken with my wife!"

The talk that followed was fast and hard. Stirred with uneasiness at the chance of being wrenched away from his work, Steve suddenly discovered a deep and violent detest of the Germans both in peace and war. He had never liked the brutes, and now to traipse over and help in their war—But Lucy sternly cut him off. He couldn't get out of it like that! His feeling against the Germans was merely a trumped up excuse! She even remembered hearing him say that he hoped the medical men at least would keep their sanity, not rave at each other like mad dogs. Their job was simple—to take care of the wounded on both sides and keep at least a few young men alive in Europe after the war! Those had been his very words. Moreover, there was Dorothy. What a comfort it would be to her, to join with Steve and help in his work while her husband was away at the front.

"You mean," Steve almost shouted, "that I am to spend the rest of my life chaperoning Dorothy?"

"I do not!" was the sharp reply. "You know as well as I do that the war will be over in a few months——"

"I *don't* know it!"

"Then you're rather a fool. Now, Steve, don't be an idiot. Here is your one and only chance to see the most tremendous thing in all your lifetime. Don't let it go by. Please, dear, please! Just think what it means. You know how I feel, how I'm always wanting things for you. And my instinct has been right—almost every time it has. This work you are doing was my idea——"

"What?"

"Oh you didn't know it, my love, but it was my own little plan from the start. The wonderful way you have built it up has made me very proud of you. But Steve, you have stuck right here nine years without a single break or change!"

"All right, that's the only reason why it has been a success! And I'm going to keep on sticking here!"

"Yes, after a few months abroad that will give you a jolt——"

"I don't want a jolt!"

"Please, dear, please! I know what you need. And this will be such a tremendous thing—and such a comfort to Dorothy—and you can so easily get recalled. And meanwhile Doctor Baker"—who was Steve's assistant—"has been so thoroughly trained in your work that we can keep things going here!"

While he was still holding out, I threw my weight into the balance. I had not meant to go to Germany till after I had been to France, but now I proposed to go with Steve. Lucy eagerly seized on this and together we began to talk of the trip as though it were decided.

"I'll admit I have no hankering after Germany," I said. "But so long as one of them has come into the family, I guess we'll have to give 'em a show and try to see their side of this."

"It will be such a comfort to Aunt Amelia," Lucy urged, "to know that you both are over there, if only for a little while."

"And besides, there's the Russian end of it. That ought to be interesting," I said. "I'm a bit hazy as to the map, but I rather think this Red Cross station is close up to the Russian frontier. They'll bring Oberookoff in some day, wounded and a prisoner—and while Steve sews up his head, I shall take his story down."

"What did you say was the name of the town?" Rising excitedly to her feet, Lucy spoke the sentence which in those days was being uttered all over our land: "Wait a moment—I'll get a map!"

Soon we three together were poring over the map of Europe. The end of it was that Steve gave in. He tried at first to reserve the right to come back in three months time. This proved to be impossible, but by then he was far along in the rush of preparations. I was busy as well, and it was not till the day before sailing that we came out again to the country. Here we were met by Tommy, who had been allowed to come home. With a kind of solemn eagerness he inspected our equipment, and he breathed in envious tones,

"Say, but you are lucky! Wish I were going!"

Whereupon, in a startled way, Lucy's hand closed on his arm. Aunt Amelia arrived just then, and soon she was entrusting us with various letters and small gifts. There was a family council which lasted until late that night.

The next day Lucy and Tommy came to New York to see us off.

"Thank God it will soon be over," she said. "But oh, Steve—and Larry, too—I'm so glad you are going to see it!"

Suddenly it came over me then that in spite of her love for her home in the hills she had never lost our father's deep hunger for the game of life in the very center of things, had never gotten over quite her keen disappointment that Steve had dropped out of it all. She was glad to have him in it again. Standing with Tommy on the dock, she smiled up as the ship moved out. Two more of the family going. There was no smile on Tommy's face. His feelings were all serious now. Looking exceedingly young and small, for all his fourteen years of growth, his eyes were fixed on us intently. So he stood until our ship had moved far out into the river.

CHAPTER XII

1.

On our journey to Berlin we met three men who, like Dorothy's husband, have often since come into this room to join the strange assembly here.

When Steve and I reached London, in a drizzly winter's dusk, we were met by a wiry little man, by birth half English and half Welsh, with sharp black eyes, thin sandy hair. I had known him in New York, where he had been the correspondent of a London paper. And now on the way to our hotel, in the frankest possible manner he began snapping out facts about England.

"We're in the most awful mess!" he declared. But he did not seem in the least disturbed. His cheerfulness was something prodigious.

As he talked I kept looking out of the window. The narrow, crooked, crowded streets were dark and dirty. dripping wet, and only yellow blurs of light shone from the shop windows on the shadows hurrying by. Our taxi abruptly stopped by the curb to make way for some volunteers; and I have a vivid impression still of one of them as he went by. An older man, about my age, tall and lank, in a golf suit, his gun carried awkwardly over his shoulder, his head bent forward—in an anxious frowning way he was looking into the darkness ahead. His companions for the most part had no guns. Now they halted in the rain while the traffic on either side went hooting, squawking, grinding past them. What a muddle London seemed that night! My journalist friend talked cheerfully on. Things at the front were in frightful shape, while here the British government, like a decrepit old machine, was creaking, slipping, lurching, repeatedly stalled by somebody's blunder. I recalled what Dorothy's husband had said of England blundering to her doom. But when I spoke of this to my friend, he smiled and said, "Oh Tommyrot!"

We dined with him that evening at the Piccadilly Grill. The great low room was crowded with officers in khaki, most of them splendid looking chaps with an air of easy concern. Their women were in evening dress, some of them gorgeous creatures. The quick animated movements, the laughter and the hum of talking in those musical English voices, seemed to come together here in tune and in time with the orchestra, which as a background to it all kept up a deep and rhythmic throb of blithe assurance. A fellow with a bandaged arm was laughing into the eyes of a girl; and she was talking eagerly, rapidly, smiling over her cigarette. In and out of the throng strolled husky lads with lazy amused expressions that said,

"England going to her doom? Oh really. Do you think so?"

In the meantime, with his sharp black eyes fixed upon our faces, our little host was saying,

"You chaps must rip your minds wide open if you want to see this war. An American correspondent was grousing here the other day because he couldn't get to the front. I tried to tell him there was a good deal worth his notice back of the line. But he withered me. 'Oh that,' he said, 'has been done to death! It's nothing but near-war stuff!' All Europe is seething in a pot, and the gods are cooking a future that will astound us when it comes—yet my conservative Yankee friend called it all 'near-war stuff.' His orthodox mind was back in the past, when wars were mere affairs of guns—while the fact of the matter is, you know, that in politics, in mines and mills and laboratories, churches, homes, all our old beliefs and habits like a lot of silly old women are being tossed up in a blanket—seventy times as high as the moon!

"But if your German brother-in-law talks again of England's doom, tell him to try to smile a bit. This isn't a simple matter of doom—for any nation—not even his own. It's a damnably glorious muddle—a matter of revolution—change! But it won't be as the Socialists planned. That looks the merest twaddle now—and you must drop it out of your mind, together with all your preconceptions, if you hope to see what's here. You'll find it hard enough as it is. The world is a bristling jungle of 'war-lies' in every land, and every conceivable prejudice and distortion of the facts. All patriotic Britishers will give you the most awful stuff about the doings of the Boches; but that is nothing when compared to the whoppers you will hear in Berlin—about the cant, hypocrisy and selfish greed of England—doomed!"

He stopped for a moment, and then in a low voice he said,

"Last week I was at Oxford, and out in front of the library on a misty moonlit night I saw a couple of hundred chaps in mufti—undergraduates—standing at ease with their cigarettes, chatting and laughing. Then I heard the order passed back, 'No lights—no smoking—absolute silence.' And a few moments later they went off into the mist—so quietly. It was as though they were passing out of existence."

I never saw this man again, for in the last year of the war he was killed in Flanders.

. . . .

2.

We came into Germany on a clear still Christmas Eve. We were unable to get berths, but we had a compartment to ourselves. I put out the light and sat by the window watching the fields. They were white with frost.

The moon sailing high in the heavens shone down on woods and little hills, on rolling meadows, narrow roads, at times on a lonely peasant cart with a lantern underneath the wheels. Snug old barns and dwellings appeared, and quaint slumbering villages; and I thought of the peaceable, prosperous, order-loving people of whom I had heard so much ever since I was a boy, when my aunt had talked of her friends in Wisconsin, and our old Bavarian nurse had told us of Bavaria, its fairy tales, its music, and the many delightful things that happened to small boys and girls. She had often spoken of Christmas Eve in Munich, with the little trees twinkling in the windows, the gifts and cakes, the games and the singing. . . . I fell asleep.

But towards midnight I was aroused by a loud commotion just outside. We had come to a junction with a road which led down to the Belgian frontier; and as our train rolled into the station, a strange and grim but theatrical scene burst upon our startled eyes. Under the great steel arches and lofty vaulted roofs of the station was a roaring sea of men. Gray green uniforms everywhere, spiked helmets, guns and bayonets, loud harsh voices, bursts of laughter and the tramp of heavy boots. And all along the platforms were brilliantly lighted Christmas trees loaded down with tinsel and little stars of Bethlehem, while a dozen enormous gramophones were blaring forth the time-honored hymn of the German Christmastide, *"Heilige Nacht."* A little knot of women and girls were working like tigers, serving coffee and sandwiches. In a few moments a train pulled out. Big German boys leaned from the windows, some of them laughing, whistling, others staring dismally. Then, as though at a word of command, in a perfect roar of voices all in time and harmony, they sang about that calm and peaceful "holy night" of long ago—as their train slid out into the dark on its journey into Belgium.

Learning that we would be here for some time, we wandered up and down through the crowds. The Red Cross women in mad haste were unpacking big hampers and huge wicker trunks; and another train came thundering in, with a thousand deep fresh voices singing, *"Stille nacht—heilige nacht,"* as though for the whole German army that hymn were an order of the night. Out of the crowded cars they tumbled, boisterous rollicking hungry lads—and after their hunger had been appeased, to each was given a Christmas package tied up in a red handerchief. Twelve thousand of these packages were given out in the station that night. Packed with men and horses, huge dirty guns with muddy wheels, and automobiles and squealing pigs, train after train came rushing through with deafening din at the rate of fifty miles an hour—freight cars groaning, rattling, lurching, screaming at the headlong pace. I had a paralyzing sense of being but a tiny atom whirled about in an orderly storm.

I felt a sudden grip on my arm, and turning met the furious glare of an elderly man in civilian clothes, short, stocky, every muscle tense, gray hair in disorder over his face, wide jaws clamped together tight, as in a snarl he poured out a torrent of German so fast that at first I could not get a word. At last I had it. I was a spy, an "Englander," sneaking in here to watch an important movement of troops. But he had me! Ach! He had me! Now he was violently shaking my arm.

"Es geht schlecht mit ihnen!" he screamed.

And he laughed. I would be shot at dawn! A couple of station guards came up, and in a moment I was marched off between their glinting bayonets, with my captor close behind.

"Es geht schlecht mit ihnen! So!"

Then Steve appeared with a surgeon friend, and we went to the Commandant, who was a quiet smiling man. He looked carefully through my passport, and the little farce was soon at an end. My captor, in profound disgust, muttering angrily to himself, went back to the platform to keep up his watch.

I could not get him out of my mind. A nation strained, its people charged with patriotic dynamite, and all together as one man—the grip of Berlin on their very souls. But as my mind was coming to this sweeping generality, I found an exception to the rule. For the incidents of this crowded night were not yet over.

Into our compartment, as our train was starting on, came a fellow whom I took to be a young German officer. He seemed to have a mean cold in his head, for over his gray field suit he wore a green muffler that swathed his neck and almost covered his shoulders. He lit a cigarette and leaned back, but I could feel his keen gray eyes now on me and now on Steve, who had fallen asleep in one corner. For a few minutes the train rushed on. Then abruptly he turned to me and said in perfect English,

"Your friend is American Red Cross?"

"Yes."

"And you?"

"A correspondent."

"Ah! You are going to write of all this!"

"Perhaps. It looks rather hopeless so far." He shot a quick glance at me:

"How do you mean?"

"There's so much of it," I answered.

"So." He studied me for a while. "But what is your point of view?" he asked.

"You mean as to who started the war?" I questioned a bit wearily.

"No!" he snapped. "I do not mean that! I am sick of these national pros and cons. What is your point of view, I ask, on life in general? You are a writer. What did you write before the war?"

"Plays," I said. And at this word the whole face of the man lit up in a flash.

"So," he replied. "As for me," he added, "I was a dramatic critic."

"The devil you were!"

"Yes—long ago." His voice had a wistful hungry tone. "Before the world got into this mess." For a moment we looked at each other in silence.

"From what I have known of critics," I said, "you ought to make an exceedingly successful German officer—of the kind described in the English press." He smiled back at me:

"Brutal."

"That's about it." he chuckled.

"The critics slaughtered you, eh?"

"Quite often. And how they enjoyed it!" He chuckled again, in a tense eager way, and offered me a cigarette.

"You called me an officer," he said. "But I am not." He threw off the scarf he was wearing. "You see? I am only a man in the ranks. But by this little trick I pass to be an officer and so I get a seat in here. How do you say in America?" He frowned in the effort to recollect. "You have such an excellent word for it. Grayft—grooft?"

"Graft," I replied. "You are a grafter. You graft a first-class compartment."

"So!" With great satisfaction at this chance to perfect his English, he repeated after me, "Graft. I am a grafter." Then abruptly he changed the topic. "Now let us speak about plays," he said; and he talked rapidly for some time. His favorites were Strindberg, Ibsen, Tchekkof, Synge, Shaw, Schnitzler—others that I forget. Some I had never heard of before. He spoke of a new school in France. In brief, he was a modern of moderns, an international highbrow. Even Suderman, I learned, was hopelessly bourgeois to his taste.

"Do you know?" he said. "In five long months I have not been alive—I have not thought—my mind is dead—it has been drowned. I shall remember this hour with you as a light—a spot-light in the dark."

Now we began to speak of the war.

"Tell me really what you think," he said, with his ironic smile. "Be frank. I am no chauvinist."

"I have seen so little," I began.

"You are lucky," he interrupted. "With me it is different—I have seen! For months I have been like a man submerged in a flood of blood and hatred. It is what no man but a paranoiac could have pictured coming over the world. But it has come! The hatred rising in all men has already butchered millions and will butcher millions more! And not only that!" he cried. "It is not even hatred well expressed! I read not only German, but Russian, English, French, Italian—and whenever I had a chance I have searched for one book, one play, one song! I find nothing but cheap drivel—the most frightful patriotic bosh!"

"You don't call yourself a patriot, then——"

"I *am* a patriot!" he declared. "I can imagine nothing more dismal than a world with nationalities merged in one—all of us talking Esperanta. What a flat dreary future for art! No, I wish to stay German. And as a German I wish to compete with Frenchmen, Russians, English—Swedes, Norwegians, Chinamen—in my own world, the theatre! Yes, I am a patriot! But all this silly nonsense about white papers and red blood—what is it? What does it decide? Shall I tell you? It decides for us all that every little lieutenant is God—not only here but in England and France! And so long as we live, this ignorant fellow will be the god to whom we bow down—excuse me, I should say, salute! Around him will be written plays that make a man sick to think about! Through him and his standards the crowd will be a hundred-fold more ignorant and brutalized even than before the war—they will cultivate prize fighters' souls! And I who am a patriot—I am against this bloody farce! And," he ended grimly, "my bitterness does me no good—for I must keep it all inside. I cannot speak. It is an ocean. I am drowned."

When we came to his station, he got up and held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said, "for letting me talk."

"Tell me," I asked, curiously, "are there many in Germany like you?"

"Did I not tell you," he rejoined, "that this hour is the only time in five months that I have been alive?"

. . . .

3.

Abruptly he left us. The train was packed to bursting now; and a moment later, with a rush, some six or eight soldiers, dirty and worn, came into our compartment. They looked like peasants or laborers. A strong animal odor filled the place. In a few minutes, on the seat where the highbrow critic had talked about Art, a row of bedraggled weary men sat with mouths open, fast asleep. And I felt as though that "ocean" had swept over me again. I wondered how many critics of the Great War I should find. I remembered the little Welsh-Britisher and tried to compare what he had said with the talk of this German. But I was dull and drowsy now. Crowded into my corner, I must have slept for an hour or more. When I awoke, the dawn had come. The soldiers were all asleep—but one. He had taken a newspaper out of his pocket and was reading with a frown. He did not look like a peasant, but more like a factory hand. At once I watched him closer, for I thought I had seen his type before. His face was lean and overwrought, and I caught a bitter expression there. He did not notice me watching him; for now he himself had put down his paper and was intently studying the faces of his companions.

Presently we stopped at a station, and in the bustle some awoke and went out for coffee and sandwiches. They scrambled back when the train moved on, and now the group began to talk. They took no notice of Steve or me, for in our corners, motionless, we pretended to be asleep. They spoke of their homes and villages. What would Christmas be like this year? But the trench life was still in their minds, and their talk soon came to that. It was of mud and icy water, long cold nights. Many grumbles were heard. Then somebody wondered how long the war was going to last. And at that, the lean-faced man began to talk to these comrades whose faces he had studied so very carefully one by one. His talk at first was careful, too.

"We're a hard crowd to beat," he declared, and to this the others promptly agreed. "But so are the French and English," he added.

"No," said a peasant, "not the English. They are pigs and bastards!"

"But they can fight," the man went on, "and I think the war will last for years."

"Well, they are to blame for it," said a stout good-natured peasant. "They started it, the devils!"

"Their government did," the other rejoined. "But I have talked with some of those men when we took them prisoners. The French are good fellows like ourselves."

"Yes, they are good fellows," the stout peasant promptly agreed.

"And they did not start the war. In Russia the Czar he started it off—because up there in Petersburg the workingmen were making him trouble—they even had barricades in the streets. So he started the war to stop their strikes. And in France it was the fat Catholic priests and the rich people who want a king. In

England I read in the papers that they have had a hard time to get their workingmen to enlist."

"They are cowards," said a peasant.

"Yes, but they did not start the war. I tell you it was started by a lot of fat rich people. And we are the fellows who have to get killed. And if we don't get killed, by God, we will have to pay war taxes! And think of the widows we'll have to help! All the fellows who are killed are leaving in every village widows and old mothers and little brats who will have to be fed! And the village will have to feed them!"

"Well, we're in for it," somebody sighed.

"All the same," said the lean-faced man, "I'll be glad when there's peace. I'll be glad when we jump out of the trenches and the Frenchmen do the same, and we run across and shake hands with each other."

"That will be fine," said the good-natured peasant. "We'll do it as soon as the war is over."

"Some fellows have done it," the speaker replied.

"What?" Instantly all were wide awake.

"Some fellow told me that where he was, our men held up spades and the French did the same—and then they ran out and all shook hands. And they did like this at the trenches." He thumbed his nose, and at this they laughed. But the laugh soon stopped and there was a silence.

"You can't do that to your officers," said one man uneasily.

"It is a lie and it never happened," said another peasant. "You are making it up."

"Perhaps it is a lie," said the speaker. "But that is what the fellow said." He threw a vigilant glance along the row of faces. "And when you come to think of it," he continued quietly, "it is not so bad, what those fellows did. You must obey your officers—because this is war. If we didn't obey, everything would be all mixed up, and the French would charge and kill us all. But if whole regiments everywhere jumped out of the trenches, as he said, and the French and English did the same, and we met in the middle of the field—then there would be war no more—and no need of officers."

There was a long silence.

"I don't like this talk at all," muttered the good-natured peasant. "It is not good to talk of this."

"You are right, brother," another growled. "You will get us into trouble!" he said, turning angrily to the speaker. "Look out!"

"Oh, there's no trouble," the speaker replied. "I just told you what that fellow said. Perhaps he was wrong and perhaps he was right. Let's talk about something else instead."

The talk ran on to other things. But from time to time I noticed two or three of the group would grow silent and frown and stare out of the window. The lean-faced man had resumed his paper with a relieved expression, as though he had put through his job for the day.

I exchanged a little look with Steve and saw he had been listening, too. Again I thought of our little Welsh friend, the journalist in London. Yes, there was certainly more in this than battles, I thought. I compared his eager optimism to the fatalistic gloom of the Frankfort critic. Which was right? . . . Revolution? . . . Far away. . . . Yet here in Germany, in one night, I had found two revolutionists! A most amazing state of things. How many more was I to find in this land of blood and iron?

But it was just one of the queer surprises, the uncanny twists and turns by which the Great War played with me, that this talk of rebellion, given me in one dose at the start, was the only talk of its kind that I heard. Many hard bleak months went by before I saw in Germany the least glimmer of revolt.

. . . .

4.

As I look back upon Berlin, a vivid memory comes to me of a certain rainy night. We were sitting at a café window on the *Friedrichstrasse.* In that narrow crowded thoroughfare with its sparkling shop windows, a winter's dusk had fallen, though it was not yet five o'clock. It was the coffee hour, and the huge hall behind us was packed full of people, but our eyes were on the street. Outside the window, on the curb, her gray woolen dress and shawl sodden and dripping wet with rain, stood a stout old woman with a bundle of newspapers under one arm. The glare from a sputtering arc-light just above her fell on the title, *"Die Zukunft."* And as though it were a message of ill-omen that she carried, the old crone kept peering sharply at the passing crowds, and every few moments darting out she would display this title and scream it in their faces:

"The Future! The Future!"

The life of Berlin swept endlessly by. Along the narrow street behind came wagons, drays and taxis, in one of which as it stopped in a jam I caught a glimpse of a couple inside, a most absorbed young officer with a slender young person in brown in his arms. The old woman saw them too, and thrust her newspaper into their window. *"Die Zukunft! Die Zukunft!"* A score of wounded soldiers passed, arms in slings, heads bandaged, with a Red Cross nurse as guide. Laughing, pushing, jostling, they entered a "movy" across the way. A girl of the street came gaily dressed, from under her small blue silk umbrella anxiously watching the faces of the men. She and her like had been through hard times. Ordered off the streets at the start of the war, since then the police repression had been modified only to a degree, and in all the relief work there was no helping hand for her. So she kept smiling eagerly, as though afraid to stop for a moment. *"Die Zukunft!"* Then she was gone. A woman with three children came up the street on the other side. She looked worried, thin and worn to the bone. She stopped before a window marked, "Christmas gifts for men in the field." As she quickly scanned these gifts, one of the children, a little boy, kept tugging her arm and pointing to a window filled with toys. She shook her head and he started to cry. Anxiously watching the crowded street, she hurried her small brood across. As they came close to our window, we noticed how seedy and patched were their clothes. The old woman, as though she had noticed too, screamed in their faces, *"Die Zukunft!"*

All Germany seemed to be passing. Stolid family parties, men, women and small children, soldiers, sailors, business men, Lutheran preachers, scientists, writers and musicians, one with his fiddle under his arm, all poured by our window talking as they went along. And as they talked of their affairs—the army and the navy, the business, homes and churches, the science, literature and music of this German people—we could hear nothing of it all but a deep vibrant humming, out of which like a challenge the old woman's voice rose harsh and clear:

"The Future!"

What would it be?

Dorothy sat by my side, and for me the whole grim city had centered around this one girl's life.

"What does she think of all this?" I asked. "And how does she feel toward her husband now?"

The antagonism I had felt against him back at Seven Pines was sharper even than before, for I could see she was far from happy. As she talked on rapidly with a strained unnatural friendliness, I kept watching her face.

From the days when we were small, we had been so close that now beneath the surface I could feel her deep uncertainty. Her husband was away at the front. Would he come back? If he came, would she want him? Did she love him? I could not be sure. For all her eager welcome, I had come up against a wall of reserve suddenly risen between us two. We had been together for hours, and still I could not get to her real thoughts and feelings. What was wrong?

So it had been ever since with Steve I had met her on the day before. When we found her in the apartment of a German neurologist and his wife, friends of her husband's with whom he had left her, Dorothy's relief and joy had at first swept everything else aside. In a tense starved fashion she had asked for news from home and had kept the talk on Seven Pines. It was Christmas! She began to speak of other Christmases long gone by—but in spite of herself, as though by chains, her mind was drawn to the Christmas here. A forlorn little tree stood by the window, and she tried to make us believe "what fun" they had had the night before. But the atmosphere of the empty rooms was grim and cheerless to a degree. The German couple were not at home; they were both out working for the war, even on this holiday.

"All Germany is like that!" she said.

Bit by bit we drew out of her the story of the last few months—and, make light of it as she would, it was a stark little narrative. She told of the anxiety of that long ocean voyage. Their Dutch ship had been stopped and searched, and only his Dutch passport had saved her husband from arrest. Max had taken her at first to the Prussian village where he was born, where his father owned the bank and the store. She had found it "terribly dreary" there and had begged to be taken to Berlin. This had met with harsh disapproval in the family circle—a needless expense in war-time. But Max had stood by her and brought her here. She eagerly impressed upon us how "kind and dear" to her he had been. His work kept him most of the time at the front, and of course that had been hard for her; but meanwhile she had made some friends, Germans and Americans, and now she was getting on "finely." But all the time she was speaking, I could feel what a strange lonely time poor Dorothy had been going through. Did she love him, or was she simply trying to show a plucky front? She asked us how the people at home were feeling now about the war, and disturbed by our replies she was soon anxiously doing her best to give us the German side of it. She was bitter against "English lies." When I told her that in London we had heard the shops in Berlin described as being empty of goods, Dorothy was indignant.

"I will show you!" she declared, and once more in that tense eager way she talked of Germany in the war—loyal to her husband, loyal to his country. Again she impressed upon us how finely she was getting on.

But when at leaving I gave her a small package of gifts and letters, I caught the homesick flash in her eyes.

"She'd give her life to be back," I thought.

The next day she took me to the shops; and surely things looked prosperous there—but in the handsome windows all along *Unter den Linden* the articles we saw displayed were almost entirely for men—warm fur vests and sweaters, boots of oiled leather, cigars, cigarettes, liquor flasks and pocket lights, wrist watches and revolvers. In nearly every window the women had been quite shut out.

"But it's good for the women," Dorothy said. We were sitting now in the big café on the *Friedrichstrasse,* with the old woman just outside harshly screaming "*Die Zukunft.*" "Before the war, Berlin had gone half mad with too much money," she said. The neurologist with whom she lived had had among his patients scores of wealthy young married women who kept apartments of their own for their various love affairs. "And one young girl of seventeen came to him with her nerves in shreds —she had just been through her third affair! He had all sorts of neurotics to treat, and every kind of hysteria. The little stories he told me were enough to turn one's hair!" She broke off with a jerk. "Of course," she added earnestly, "most German women aren't like that. I was speaking of the Smart Set, which is very much the same I guess in London or in Paris, and certainly in Petrograd. Berlin has been no worse than the rest." She returned to her neurologist friend: "But now he smiles and says he is ruined, his practice almost entirely gone. His patients are so hard at work they've forgotten they ever had any nerves."

For a time we watched the people outside. And as my young cousin commented on the passers-by, I could tell by the figures that she chose how intensely she was trying to make these people appear likable and sympathetic. But as the old woman's cry broke harshly in upon us, into Dorothy's vivid blue eyes again came that uncertainty.

"I wonder," she asked sharply, "what's to become of the young girls in Europe if the war goes on? Who will be left to marry them? Will they be willing to live like nuns, or will they want to have normal lives?" She frowned. "We've been pretty old-fashioned about such things at home, I think." She gave me a queer little smile. "Do you remember in those sprees of ours how we would sit in a café just as we are doing now—and air our views, and feel how liberal we were, and how emancipated about such things? But we weren't really." She stopped short and caught her breath. She had remembered *my* affair. In an instant she recovered herself. "And most Americans are like that. But over here it's different—their views are broad, to say the least. I wonder what these girls will do?"

"I wonder what *you* will do?" I thought. "Do you love him? What is wrong? Just before I left Seven Pines, Dorothy's mother, in counseling me as to how I could help the girl, had hinted that in a letter home Dorothy had told her that she would not have a child—not while life was "still so strange." But was that the only reason? Now I told her of our plan to take her with us to the place where Steve's hospital work would be. And the flash of joy that came on her face gave me a swift tingling shock. Then it vanished.

"I don't know," she said, in a low voice. "I'd love to be with you and Steve—but I have work here."

"You would have it there. Steve would see to that," I urged. She stared out of the window.

"I wonder if Max would like me to? You see, I'm here among his friends—and I'm really getting on so well. I wonder if it wouldn't—hurt him just a little—if I went with you and Steve? I don't want to hurt him, Larry. He—means so very much to me," she ended with her lips compressed.

We were interrupted then, for talking we had grown so absorbed that we had forgotten the time. It was the supper hour now and the place was packed to bursting. A big lad dressed in a black leather suit made a stiff bow and sat down at our table. He had a handsome florid face with an impassive dull expression. He was a motorcycle scout and had been in Belgium, he explained. We ordered some supper and talked with him. He was a bit reserved at first; but when he learned that Dorothy had married one of his countrymen, he grew more communicative. He had been not only in Belgium and France but in East Prussia too, he said. He showed me his small "Browning," and I asked how many he thought he had killed. With a reminiscent smile on his face he began to count on his fingers.

"Eight," he replied. "And one was a girl." Dorothy made a quick little movement.

"Why a girl?" I asked him. He looked at me calmly:

"What else could I do? I was with my comrade in front of a farm. It was hot—we had stopped for a drink of water. There was a shot from behind the hedge not ten meters off, and he fell dead. I turned and saw a Belgian girl taking aim at me with her rifle. Both of us fired—and she missed. It was very lucky for me," he said. "I had some very important dispatches.

"On another day," he continued, "we found a wounded German inside a big brick oven that stood beside a farm-house. We pulled him out but he was dead. His face was brown. He was baked to death. We found three peasants in the barn, and first we made them dig their grave. Then we threw them into the hole and finished them with our bayonets."

I caught the look on my cousin's face and tried to stop this German youth, but at first he paid no heed. On he went in his stolid voice:

"In East Prussia we entered a village from which a troop of Cossacks had just been driven by our men. They had left four German women and three little girls —stripped naked—all nailed by their hands and feet to a barn. They were dead, but their bodies were still warm."

Dorothy gave a little cry. That stopped him. There was an awkward pause. He quickly finished his supper and then with another punctilious bow he rose and left us. I turned to her.

"Have you heard much of this?" I asked. She shook her head. "I wonder how much of it is true?"

"It sounded true," was her tense reply.

"So did the tales I heard in London and at home," I said. "But for every atrocity there are probably fifty such stories that start."

"But even if most of them are lies," my cousin answered passionately, "don't you see the hideous harm they do? This boy, for example, he tells them—tells them everywhere he goes! And thousands of others do the same—in Germany, France and England, too! In every village, every hut, such hideous things are being told—and being told to children—making their small hands grow cold and icy as they feel that the world is full of monsters—fiends—called Cossacks, Frenchmen, Germans, Boches—enemies—to be stamped under foot! That's the hideous part of this war!" she breathed.

I noticed how tired and strained she was. I proposed that we go to a concert that night, and she shot a grateful look of relief.

"Oh, Larry dear, let's go!" she exclaimed. We got a paper and looked up the evening's list of entertainments. "Here it is—a symphony concert in Beethoven Hall." We took a taxi and set out. It was still raining. As we passed along *Unter den Linden,* we heard the cry, *"Ein Luftschiff!"* And looking up we saw a dark phantom with spectral eyes of red and green drift by under the stars above. On a dark side street we stopped to make way for two or three hundred recruits, in citizens' clothes with satchels and boxes, heavy boots strung over their shoulders. They made me think of the little crowd of volunteers in London. But Dorothy was not thinking of that. The street was empty except for a girl. Holding an umbrella over the baby in her arms, she hurried along beside one of the men. I caught a glimpse of her face as she passed, and she looked terribly alone. Then I felt Dorothy's clutch on my arm, and it was as though she were saying sharply:

"That is why I won't have a child!"

But the next moment she was smiling, and telling what wonderful music she had been hearing in Berlin. When we came to Beethoven Hall the concert had already begun. They were playing a Haydn symphony, and in seats or at tables behind sat a thousand men and women —a few with steins before them, some of the women knitting, some of the men with heads in their hands. The old symphony was so peaceful, so sweet and gracious and tender and gay, rising up out of the Germany of a hundred and fifty years ago. I could feel Dorothy relax. Those hideous stories were left outside. I forgot the thundering trains filled with troops and cannon, the ugly modern industrial towns, the foundries working day and night, for modern Prussia's place in the sun. Watching the men and women there, all under the spell of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, they appeared as though transformed—a peaceful, music-loving race. They were playing "The Eroica" now, and Beethoven loomed before my mind as the epitome of *"die ordnung"*—for all the tremendous passions in that grand old symphony were held down by an iron restraint. And so it was with the people around me. From time to time my cousin's eyes turned in a happy way to mine, as though she were begging me to believe that this was the real Germany.

"Oh how I hate this war!" she whispered. Later as I took her home, she spoke again of her husband—of how kind he was to her and of the risks he ran at the front.

"And it's more than that," she said. "You know how he is—he's the sensitive kind, with a deep imagination. He sees so much the others miss—and it hurts him so. He's—oh so changed! You'll find his views—so different! I want you to be friends, you know—it will mean so much to me! Goodnight, Larry dear—what a wonderful day!"

"You'll think over that plan of coming with us?" Her face contracted.

"Yes," she said.

Did she really care for him? I came back to my first question. "Is she happy when he's here? Or does she simply pity him—and half feeling her mistake but fighting off admitting it—not happy with him, not willing to bear him the child that he wants—for that very reason is she not all the more determined to be loyal to him," I asked, "in this crisis of his life?"

Die Zukunft—what would it be? I saw much of her in the next few days, and most of the time we were alone, for Steve was busy seeing officials to arrange for the work ahead.

Our next evening was one I shall never forget. I learned of a meeting in Beethoven Hall and persuaded her to go with me there. Had I known what was on the program I would not have taken her. The whole *stimmung* of the place had changed. The hall was crowded to the doors, and in place of the orchestra on the stage stood one of Prussia's foremost actors. A stout man with pallid face, his appearance was greeted with applause. He recited poems and songs of war, and he seemed to hold the crowd in his hand. Rising at last to his climax, he began the chant that was known all over Germany:

> French and Russian, they matter not;
> A blow for a blow and a shot for a shot;
> We love them not, we hate them not;
> We hold the Weichsel and Vosges-gate.
> We have but one and only hate,
> We love as one, we hate as one,
> We have one foe and one alone——
> ENGLAND!
>
> He is known to you all, he is known to you all.
> He crouches behind the dark gray flood,
> Full of envy, of rage, of craft, of gall,
> Cut off by waves that are thicker than blood.

Come, let us stand at the judgment place,
An oath to swear to, face to face,
An oath of bronze no wind can shake,
An oath for our sons and their sons to take!
Come hear the word, repeat the word,
Throughout the Fatherland make it heard!
We will never forego our hate;
We have all but a single hate;
We love as one, we hate as one,
We have one foe and one alone——
ENGLAND!

In the captain's mess, in the banquet hall,
Sat feasting the officers, one and all.
Like a sabre blow, like the swing of a sail,
One seized his glass held high to hail.
Sharp snapped like the stroke of a rudder's play,
Spoke three words only:— "To the Day!"

On he went, verse after verse. His face red and distorted now, his two clinched fists held high in air—the actor finished this hideous chant in a veritable scream of rage. And then those stolid German men and women rose from their seats, and we heard a burst of cries that set the air to quivering. I felt Dorothy's hand on my arm. Slowly it tightened.

"Let's get out of this," I whispered.

"Please!"

In the street she walked along in silence breathing the cold night air in a slow resolute fashion, as though she were bracing herself again for the effort to bring together, in her own thoughts and loyalties, two nations already so wide apart.

"It's hard for you to realize," she said to me after a little, "how such hatred can arise. You don't know how it feels to keep hearing every day and every night of more friends and relatives killed! You have no idea of the strain of it all!"

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And to give me an idea of that, she took me the next afternoon to a large building of red brick which had once been the War Academy. As we climbed the broad stone stairs inside, a stout middle-aged woman was coming down, supported by two others. She was sobbing; her face was a fiery red. On the floor above was a lofty chamber with lead colored columns at either end and pictures of Prussian heroes upon the walls and ceiling; and though this place was crowded, all was strangely hushed and still. Upon a placard on one wall was written in heavy letters, "Walk softly and speak low." In the center of the hall was a semi-circular counter, behind which sat many elderly clerks, most of them in black frock suits—they looked like undertakers. And facing this counter in rows of chairs, several hundred men and women, tense and silent, motionless, as though at some gripping tragedy, sat watching a great red curtain, which was restless, never still. Every few moments it leaped apart, as a messenger came quickly through. Then a name would be called out, and some man or woman would jump up and go to the counter—would stand there rigid, listening. Here Germany learned of her dead.

Forty-five hundred hospitals reported to this place each week, pouring in the details which in scores of rooms men and girls by hundreds, writing and typewriting, copying, comparing, checking, classifying, with Prussian precision were building up into neat typewritten little tales, which on post cards every day were sent out by the thousands to German towns and villages.

There was a "prisoner's section" here, the walls massed solid with card catalogues in which was kept a record of every enemy taken or killed. An official opened a heavy safe and lifted out an enormous ring on which were strung hundreds of medals of lead—and as he put them in Dorothy's hands he told us that each medal had been taken from the body of a Frenchman killed on the field. With a quick start she handed it back. He showed us, too, an amulet from the body of a Russian. It was a little block of wood, old and worn at the edges, bearing in faded blue and gold the picture of some Russian Saint, with a dim crude suggestion of Holy Moscow and the Kremlin rising in the background. Some simple peasant of the North had worn this faded holy thing to guard him from machine guns. There were other amulets from France with pictures of the Mother of Christ. There had been hundreds of them here. And all these little safeguards, day by day and night by night, through bureau after bureau and city after city, were constantly travelling back into the enemy countries, to towns and little villages, to come at last into the hands that had placed them once around the necks of many simple men now dead.

As we left this clearing house of death, along a dimlit hallway we found a group of motionless women sitting on chairs in front of a door. Over it I read the sign, "Apply for death certificates here." Out of doors, a huge bright moon hung just over the end of the street. And by its light, on the wall outside, I saw a long narrow band of white made up of newspaper pages, where in thousands of columns of solid type were the names of the wounded, the missing, the dead. And almost imperceptibly moving along this band of white were dark figures, men and women—slowly searching—page by page.

How to keep up the morale of these slow searchers in the dark? Upon our last afternoon in Berlin we went into an old Lutheran chapel. It was painted white inside and it had a low gallery running around. Here they were about to hold a service of prayer for the men at the front—and the small church was rapidly filling with women. In groups or alone, silently they came in and sat down in the stiff wooden pews. A few of them wore heavy crepe, and most of the others were dressed in black. They sat looking up at the chancel, where with a candle on either side stood a small white figure of Christ. Close by stood a larger figure, tall and stern and robed in black, the pastor of the Kaiser. He was an old man and slightly stooped, his face was lean and powerful, and his voice though very low had a deep magnetic note, as he stood by that small figure in white and interpreted the will of Christ to those long rows of silent women. As he slowly explained to them how this was a war in Jesus' name, I wondered what my companion was thinking of her new adopted land. Germany seemed very grim. And I spoke of that when we came out.

"But it isn't only here," she said. "As that terrible old man talked on, I was thinking of other clergymen, in Russia, France and England, all standing up in churches before long rows of women in black. And I wondered," she said softly, "how much harm they will do to the influence of the little white figure there."

How her mind kept shooting ahead. As I looked at her, it seemed to me that her thoughts turned sharply inward then to the question so many millions were asking: "And what will this war do to me?" It had done so much already. How changed she was from the impulsive warm hearted girl of a few months before. What enormous breaches had been made in her old standards and ways of living, what devastating vistas had opened up before her view.

"And yet," I thought, "if she really loved him, she'd have that to hold to—some solid ground beneath her feet. . . . Or does she? And is all this only my imagining—because I dislike these Germans so?"

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6.

That night Dorothy, Steve and I were dining together in a café when her husband came and found her there.

In case he came home she had left word at her apartment where she would be. "For often," she said, "he can be here only for a few hours, you know. He has to work so frightfully hard." He had strikingly changed since I'd seen him last. His face had a grayish color, and there were haggard markings about his mouth and kindly eyes. He had been on the western front watching the effect of certain high explosives. He looked like a man coming out of a trance, or some deep inward torturing struggle. Months afterward I learned what it was. He was thinking of the first gas attack. It was to take place in the spring, and he was involved in the preparations—but he could give us no hint of that. Sharply, as he came out of his trance, I thought I saw a little pang of jealousy stab into him at sight of Dorothy with us. Her back was turned when he came in, and smiling she was reading aloud the solemn boyish letter which Tommy had written her from school. It was Steve who spied her husband first, and at his quick low exclamation I saw Dorothy look up with a startled jerk of her head. The next moment she had risen and gone to meet him; and when they came back to our table, both their faces were smiling masks. He gave us a warm welcome.

"I am so glad you fellows are here! It has been lonely for my wife. She has been so plucky about it," he said.

"Oh fiddlesticks, Max." As he looked at her then, there was no doubt of his love for her. He wanted at once to know our plans; and when I spoke of our idea of taking her with us, a sharp little contraction came on his dark sensitive face.

"That is good," he answered quickly. "That is fine—the very thing!" He did not look at her as he spoke. She was watching him intently.

"But Max," she said, "I've been getting on so much better now—I have work and I'm making friends. Are you sure you wouldn't rather have me stay?" she asked him.

"No!" he said. "You want to go! Why shouldn't you? What could be more natural? If you know they are there, you won't be happy here—and I want you happy, Dorothy. If you stay I shall worry about you. I want you to go! Please do as I ask! Besides," he added, "my work, too, is often on the eastern front."

She caught eagerly at this point. Perhaps he could even come to her there more often than if she stayed in Berlin. He agreed that he could; but as I watched, I pitied him; and in the questions that she asked I could feel Dorothy pitying, too, and mothering him. My aversion left me. What a decent sort he was, after all. Now for her sake he was trying hard to be very friendly. He asked me what I had seen in Berlin, and he said that this was nothing compared to what I should see at the front.

"When I met you last in America, I tried to tell you how it would be—but I myself had no conception of this grip of war," he said. "No will of my own—I only serve. So it is with us all—the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the good and the bad. All are working for an idea. What is the idea? Is it wholly good? Is it entirely just and right? By no means! On the other hand, it is not what our enemies would have you believe it. They lie and we lie; they hate and we hate. There has been blame upon both sides, and the issues are in a muddle now. But one thing is clear—the effect of this on all the peoples of Europe," he said. "Everyone has been transformed—by a force so resistless, that no man if he is not a fool can look on without such anxiety as he never felt in his life before! When the war is over, how shall it be? Shall the world plunge around like a ship in a storm, with the old anchors cast aside—shall we have revolutions then? Or will men, who are such patriots now, go blindly back to their little ruts of selfish, selfish living, and be no better than before? How can we keep the middle course? How can we get such a peace as will bring us all together in the one great job of building a world where war will be gone—and tyranny—and ignorance—and all this hating?"

There was a wistful look on the face of this man who had given his life thus far to humanitarian ideals.

"What kind of a world will it be?" he asked. "All that must be for the present unknown. We look ahead and see nothing familiar—everything strange. Meanwhile we fight. How hard it is—how strange it is!"

Dorothy had been watching him in a strained and self absorbed sort of way, as though she were thinking hard.

"How soon must you go back to the front?"

"I must go tomorrow," he said.

I saw her wince. He saw it too—and a flash of joy came in his eyes.

"Poor devil," I thought. "Yes, you love her all right —and she pities you."

Would love grow out of this pity, I wondered. Only time would tell. At least she was going with us now. And soon we four together were discussing the details of the trip to the town near the eastern front, and of how he would manage to join us there, with that keen animation and relief with which so many millions of people, amid the strangeness and the strain, the terrible *bigness* of the war, kept turning aside to little arrangements affecting their own pigmy lives. It was only so that they kept themselves from going utterly insane.

CHAPTER XIII

1.

Steve's hospital was in a town in a flat bleak region of mines and mills, where at times you could hear from the eastern front the deep rumble of the guns. The hospital had been a theatre. Gilt signs on either side the door, "Parkett Rechts" and "Parkett Links," directed spectators to their seats. But the seats were gone. Gone too was all the tinsel, the cheap plush, the tawdry trimmings of this house of laughter and of tears; and as we entered that first day the place was bare and strangely still. Through the tall windows on one side the sun threw long soft bars of light. On the ceiling upon billowy clouds lay Venus under a canopy, with nude attendants around her and pudgy cupids shooting darts. In the rear were two steep galleries. And in front, over the stage which had mirrored the life of a nation in peace, a gray steel curtain had come down. Overhead there hung two flags, German and American, and between them a great banner, pure white with a heavy cross of red. Above this cross two huge masks, Comedy and Tragedy, looked down upon the scene below—looked down upon long lines of beds crowded close together. On small black boards above them were the names of many battlefields. And men and boys with close cropped heads, stretched out or with their legs and arms held up in slings by pulley weights, lay motionless and silent there—some looking up at those leering masks, others with their eyes tight closed.

And though five years have gone since then, some of those men in the last few months have often come into my room at night to join our silent company.

On a bed near the door lay a small thin man of middle age, with shaven head, a sharp eager face, high cheek bones and hollow cheeks. He lay there restlessly watching and trying by moans and gestures to attract someone's attention. Each time that he caught my glance, he jabbered Polish imploringly. No one of his neighbors could understand, but at last an Austrian peasant called from his bed up the line,

"I know his talk. I know what he says. He is from Galicia."

They spoke Polish back and forth, while the men in beds nearby at once grew deeply curious. Then the Austrian translated:

"He says he had a little farm—and he had a wife and two grown sons—and he says he had four cows. His sons they took for the army. His wife, he don't know where she is—but he wants to know about his cows. If the cows are gone away, he says, how can he plough his field this spring? He will have to harness in his wife, and she will be cross, the old devil. I guess he will never see those cows. I know because I passed that way, and it was bad as we marched along. The women ran out of their houses and held up their little brats in their arms, squalling at us for some bread. We gave them all the bread we had, but we had to go thirty miles that day and half of us almost fell down—we got so weak with nothing to eat. So the next day we kept our bread and let them go on with their squalling, the brats. How they grabbed their little bellies and howled! It's bad for children in a war, but——"

"Stop talking about what you saw," called a wounded soldier. "What does the Galician say?"

"He says he drove a wagon in an ammunition train.

One night both his feet froze hard, and the next day they began to ache and grew as big as devils. So then he says he was sent here, and now they have cut off all his toes, and his feet are good for nothing. He says that if his cows are lost it will be hard and very slow to go with such feet over ploughed ground and hold his plough and drive his wife. He thinks he cannot do it. He says his old woman is too weak—he does not want to make her pull. But what can he do? His sons are gone and he thinks they are killed. He says war is bad for a peasant. He says he is feeling very bad. His feet are spoiled—he cannot walk. He says, 'How can I walk back to my farm before the armies get my cows?' "

Steve had come up and was listening.

"Tell him," he said kindly, "that when he is well he can ride home free on a railroad."

When this was translated, the peasant doubtfully shook his head. He lay there all day thinking, with anxious moans from time to time. Again he seemed fairly bursting to talk.

"He thinks," explained the Austrian, "that they will not let him ride free on a train. He says that he has thought it out—and that on a train you must always pay. And he says that when he came here he had some good boots, but they cut them off. He asks you, will you get those boots? He thinks they are out in the beer garden where the Sisters pile our things. You take them to a shoemaker, he says, and fix them so they fit his club feet, so he can walk home and hunt up his cows. He says that if his cows are gone he and his old wife will die. He says they will sit in their house and die. He says he is feeling very bad."

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2.

But it was not so with all of them. Most of the convalescents were a contented looking lot In a bed not far away sat a tall self-satisfied youth to whom the war was a fine game.

"You see," he told me earnestly, "war is very good for me—for I can get promoted fast. In my military school they would have kept me working years, but as soon as the fighting began I ran away from school with my friend. He was only fifteen years and three months. We heard troops marching by at night and all the boys got crazy. They sat up in bed and talked, but all except us were afraid to go. We climbed from our windows out on the roof, we slid down a pipe to the ground and ran to the road and hid in a bush; and when some more troops came by in the dark we fell in and marched along. My friend is now an officer. He writes me he is very glad. You see in the army," he ended, "in peace promotion is very slow—you must wait for officers to die—while now they are killed by thousands!"

"You get used to seeing them killed, I suppose." But he quite missed my irony.

"Oh yes," he replied, "you soon become so you do not mind it at all. What is the use of thinking of them? In war you must not think of that. You must just learn to do as you're told."

Learn to do as you are told. There was another youngster here who had learned this so thoroughly, that in one dramatic flash he gave me the whole *stimmung* of war. A bullet had shattered his right jaw. As they prepared to operate, he fought hard against the ether, and they could barely hold him down. He thought he was in the trenches; the Russians in a night attack were pouring down upon him. He fought them off and strained to rise, and with glaring mad delirious eyes he kept shouting, "Die Russländer!" Then a little German dentist, who was to assist in the operation, leaned over and snapped into his ear the one sharp order, "Achtung!"

And instantly this German boy stiffened out as though on parade!

They had learned to do as they were told. The Great War towered over these men and boys, crushing down upon their minds and stamping their thinking all of a piece. They were under its spell; they could not think. At the order "Achtung!" each one grew rigid in body and soul. System, order, discipline. Was the whole world becoming like that?

But surely, I thought, among all these men, many of them so silent, there must be questioning going on. There was one who had lain on his back for ten weeks. Though he had been growing worse of late, he did not complain of his sufferings. He slept little. Day and night he stared at the flags and the laurel wreaths, and often he seemed to be thinking hard. But he gave not a sign of what he was thinking—until one day he spoke to a priest. It was on a Sunday morning. A table altar had been placed at the end of the aisle just under the stage, with two tall altar candles and a large gilt crucifix. The priest in his white surplice and embroidered vestments, attended by his acolyte, had been saying mass. After it was over, he strode up and down the aisle furiously declaiming against Russians, French and English, as all men accursed of God. And then this wounded soldier, who for ten weeks had lain so still, raised on one elbow and shook his fist.

"Leave us alone! Stop your shouting!" he cried, in a loud shrill quivering tone. "You are only making everyone worse! Stop talking of war! What do you know? We're all so tired! Leave us alone!"

Late that evening Steve and I went into one of the upper stage boxes where a doctor slept each night. Here was a small iron cot with an old red quilt upon it, and Steve made ready to go to bed while I sat watching the scene below. There was but one soft little light down there, on a table by the entrance door. The night nurse sat beside it. All the rest was indistinct and dim in heavy shadows. The beds looked like so many gray ghosts. Out of them, with uncanny effect, the legs and arms that were in slings pointed up into the dark. The place was motionless and still, except for deep rough breathings and occasional moaning cries. From a bed back under the gallery came a monotonous pleading voice. "Schwester," it kept saying. "Schwester, Schwester, Schwester." Suddenly out of the shadows burst a savage beast-like scream. I saw the dim white figure of the nurse as she went to the bed. Then morphine and then silence. A lung-shot case began to cough blood. It was a long bubbling horrible cough, and he kept it up at intervals. From another corner presently came a sudden shout of "Charge!" Then came another: "Die Lazaret!" And in a moment the place was bedlam. I heard the most infernal shrieks. Men suddenly jumped up in bed crying, "Die Russländer!" Others yelled, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" This lasted for some minutes. By degrees they quieted down; but out of the silence came a sound that made me lean out of the box. On a bed directly under me lay a sleeper tensely whispering. Abruptly it stopped and in his dream he gave a quick delighted laugh. Again the whispering went on.

And listening there, I got startling hints of the vast and dazzling feverish universe of dreamland that was hovering every night over thirty million fighting men—not only dreams of horror but human, comic, intimate dreams, compounded of the memories, the inner thoughts, desires, passions, hopes and schemes of these tiny atoms caught into the storm. I thought of four thousand hospitals like this scattered over Germany, and of other hospitals in Austria, Russia, England and France, and of the men by millions who lay on their backs and silently stared at bare ceilings and at walls, at flags and wreaths and garlands, and at the huge red cross of Christ. And I wondered what they thought about war. What would they say to their wives at home and what would they teach to their children? Would they say, like that tall smiling boy who had run away from school, "War is very good for us"—or would they, like the silent man who had lain for ten weeks dying, shake their fists at the powers that be, and cry, "We are tired! Leave us alone!"

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3.

Though I had seen much of Dorothy, there is little that I can recall. The other impressions pouring in were so vivid and tumultuous. I made trips down into Austria and along the eastern front. Each time I came back to the hospital I found my cousin working hard. Plainly it was an immense relief for her to be here among her own people; and I could see she was grateful to Max for having so promptly urged her to come, in spite of the pang that it cost him. And as though she grudged herself the relief she felt in being here, Dorothy worked the harder. At all hours day and night I would find her at a bedside or going on some nurse's errand, or smilingly serving coffee to a group of convalescents, or down on her knees scrubbing the floor with a determined little scowl. Weeks passed and her husband did not come. She seldom spoke to me of him now, but I knew he was constantly in her mind. Why did he stay away so long? Was it only his work, or did he think that she could be happy only with us?

She hinted this not to me but to Steve, and told him how it tortured her. I noticed that she avoided me. Gone was the warm intimacy of the days we had spent in Berlin. She turned to Steve. He was her chief, and she slaved for him. Old Steve was in his element here, talking little, working hard. He had two young surgeons under him. His predecessor had left loose ends. He brought them together. Through the punctilious etiquette and the rigid German system, his work was more or less bound up with that of other hospitals in the town. He found certain holes in this German perfection, and he began to fill them up, or to evade the endless red tape.

"God pity the world," he said to me once, "if these people win the war."

But this was the only expression of that kind I can recall. Here were wounded men, and he was a surgeon—and he had time for nothing else. Let the surgeons stick to their jobs and try to keep a few young men in Europe alive when the struggle was over.

And this attitude in Steve made Dorothy turn to him now as a tower of strength. With me it was different. We often jarred on one another. For with that vague self reproach for having left Berlin to come here, more determined even than before to be loyal to her husband's land, at first she had been doubly anxious that in the stories I sent home I should miss nothing good and see nothing bad in these wounded German boys. This made me obstinately dwell on my deepening feeling against Berlin. And the very fact, that my cousin and I had meant so much to each other before, made it all the harder now—brought quarrels so sharp that for days together she would leave me severely alone. Then I would remember the position she was in; I would get a sense of her loneliness, admire her pluck and cheerfulness. And Dorothy's old personality, so warm and blithe and intimate, would cast its spell upon me. Humbly I would try my best to be friends with her again, and for a time I would succeed and we would be nearly as before. But I could feel the thought of her husband always in the back of her mind. This pity for him, and this gratitude, was it bringing her to care for the man?

When he arrived one afternoon, she was busy at some work by a window. Her back was turned. All at once, though he had not spoken a word, I saw her give a little start. She jumped up, and with a sharp cry went to him quickly and into his arms. I remember the look of joy on his face as I saw it for a moment then.

"By bringing her here," I thought grimly, "and making her feel she deserted him, we have thrown her into his arms."

We did not see them again until night.

He had just come from the western front, and all were eager to question him. His replies were determinedly cheerful, but I kept watching his gaunt face and the queer self-absorption there; and I felt Steve and Dorothy doing the same. What had happened to the man? What inner thought was haunting him? He was thinking of that gas attack. He could still give us no hint of the plan; he had to keep it to himself; and it must have been like fire inside. For despite his little faults, Max was a chap of fine instincts; he had given his whole life so far to the work of saving other lives—and looking back now, I think I can get an inkling of the struggle that had aged him in this startling way, made him so thin and gaunt and gray. But I doubt if he had any feeling of guilt. In his logical German way he had struggled hard to bring his new work into line with the old. This, too, would save lives—millions. For he believed—and he had good reason—that gas would speedily end the war. He hinted at this by what he said of his work on high explosives. The more murderous they were, he declared, the sooner the butchery would cease.

"I was wrong in what I said before. War is sheer murder," he declared. "And the very worst of it is its disguise, its camouflage—all the splendid elements that hide what it really is! You draw far away and you look back and you can see it is only blood—but when you are there, your very mind is blinded by the flashes—flashes from the souls of men—flashes from the soul of war! And yet it is false and it is wrong!"

"If it were only over!" breathed Dorothy. She was sitting beside him. I saw his hand close quickly on hers; and with that new look of happiness which I had seen when he arrived, he said,

"It cannot last much longer now. We shall soon go back to America."

. . . .

4.

I drew close to him in the next two weeks, and to his view of the conflict—for Max had been able to arrange to take me to the western front. I shall give but a few of the memories:

It was still dark and the stars were out, for we had made an early start. In a big gray army car we had left the old city of Lille and were speeding down a long straight road between two endless rows of trees, tall delicate gray phantoms, the poplar trees of France. But I saw no French people there—except once when in the dim blue light we came up to a woman and a huge dog, together dragging a cart through the mud. On the cart sat a small boy wrapped to his ears. As we passed them, with an angry jerk the woman turned her cart into the ditch, while the big dog barked good-naturedly and slowly wagged his bushy tail—a friendly international wag that had nothing whatever to do with the case.

We were running along the Bavarian lines about three miles behind their front. The fields lay still in the starlight, with little blueish veils of mist rising out of the hollows flooded from incessant rains. We sped through ruined villages, empty, silent, bleak as death. From the east came a stronger glow of light, and from over there by the rising sun the noise of big guns grew louder. We passed a battalion of men and boys, unkempt and gaunt, clothes yellow with mud; and a few minutes later we stopped our car near a deep muddy hollow. Here was a German battery. By each one of the four guns stood some thirty shrapnel shells in their tall wicker cases. The fire was being directed by an officer in the tower of a church some distance off. His orders came by telephone to an officer in a dugout close by, and the latter kept calling them out to his men.

"Fertig!"

Then a leaping roar and a deep long swishing sigh as the big shell went rushing off. It took on a savage animal sound, and in a few seconds we heard the crash as it burst in the midst of the enemy. Had men been killed? The man in the church tower knew—but these men here might go through the war and never see one of their victims, I thought. Murderers? No—machinists! They glanced at me from time to time with that same superior smile I have had from other men in skilled trades, in mills and automobile shops.

Later that morning Max took me down into a bombproof chamber. The roof had been of heavy concrete, and over that ten feet of earth—but a great French shell had struck above and ploughed down through into the midst of some forty soldiers sleeping below; it had burst and blown everything to bits. The big hole was open to the sky. Beneath was a mass of concrete, dirt and ragged bits of uniforms. Many dead bodies were still down there. From one a yellow fist stuck up with a lead pencil clinched in it tight. Over all was the smell of iodoform.

"This is ugly. This is war. But this had to be," Max said to me. "As time goes on, it will get worse. New ways of killing will be invented. It is the business of war to kill—and the quicker the killing the sooner the end. Remember that when you get home and you read of the work we still must do."

I looked at the dark strained face of the man and wondered of what he was thinking.

In a little French village that day we came to a small hospital, in what had been a children's school. In one room on a rough pine bed a young French prisoner lay on his back; and as he stared up at the ceiling, there were big beads of sweat on his face. Both his legs, on the night before, had been amputated above the knees. He looked at me, gave a quick stern frown and then went on staring as before. I felt an intruder and turned away. Above his bed, filling half the wall, was a large school map of France, and near it hung "The Rights of Man," writ large in French for children.

As we went on that afternoon, everywhere to the horizon crawled dark sluggish masses made up of wagons, horses, men. There was deep intensity in it all and an elemental bleakness. Everything that men had made in ages in this peaceful land was stripped naked, jagged, rough. The villages through which we passed were nothing but mire, ruined homes. Yes, the French had a right to be bitter! And the savage irony of it was that now they were being forced to continue the work of destruction themselves. They were shelling their own villages. In one we entered a little church. There were shell holes in the walls and the shattered figures of Saints on the floor. We climbed by rickety ladders a hundred feet to the bells above, and from there looked off to the westward. The sun had just gone below the horizon. Outlined against the afterglow stood a line of delicate poplars; and nearer, over a village nestling into the edge of a wood, moment by moment rose lovely little clouds of white that went wreathing up to the heavens—the afternoon fire of the French, which the Germans called

"The Evening Prayer." These little prayers hung lovingly around the church this side the village. From each came a dull sullen boom. Suddenly there was a cloud of brown dust, and when it cleared we saw that a part of the church tower had come down.

The twilight deepened rapidly, and it was night when we left our car and started on foot for the front line, splashing heavily through the mire of a narrow country lane. It had begun to rain again. For some time I heard only the crash of big guns. Then came the swift ugly buzz of a bullet over our heads—and another and another. Before us a rocket shot up in the dark. In the flare that it made I saw a small farm-house about a half a mile away, the place where we were to spend the night. Over it with long weird sighs the shrapnel shells were flying.

When we arrived, both the house and the barn were perfectly dark. Not a glimmer of light through the windows to attract shell fire here. Only bullets from French rifles struck with a smack on the side of the barn or whizzed through the narrow open space between it and the farm-house. I looked toward the sound of the firing. At first there was nothing but dense rain. Then up went a rocket again, throwing a wild uncanny light on a bleak expanse of watery mud, on fields and trees and gleaming pools—and roused afresh by this sight of their world, the men down there in the hollow fiercely redoubled their fire. Here the French and German lines were close together. Plenty of blood had been spilled in these fields; but in all this time, the Germans had pushed forward only two hundred yards. And I got the feeling of No Man's Land as a broad brown band of mud reaching for nearly three hundred miles and winding like some monstrous snake, which as the line swayed back and forth was always slowly writhing.

Later I heard soldiers singing, faintly as though far away—but then I discovered that the sound came from underneath our feet; and by a ladder I followed Max down into the "Villa Sorgen Frei," deep under a manure pile. It was a hole with walls of logs and a ceiling so low we could not stand. A small stove made it stifling hot. But here we stayed for an hour or so with eight or ten Bavarian boys. A drum, a mouth organ and a flute, an old iron gong and a clumsy guitar with telephone wires for the strings, made up this soldier orchestra. Leading them was a dark little man, who in Munich had played in a café. With an old hat on the side of his head, spectacles on the end of his nose and a drumstick for a baton, he sternly rapped for order, and carried his small orchestra through "Puppchen" for our benefit. After that came folk songs—"Röslein auf der Heide," "Morgen Rot" and many more. Then they shouted out a song that he himself had written, to the glory of that bomb-proof hole and the courage of men "in the iron rain." The refrain was to the machine gun. Another folk song for Germany.

A little after midnight we went into a bomb-proof under the barn, where a couple of old mattresses had been spread for us on the floor; and I lay for hours listening to the rifles and machine guns that sounded like steel riveters on the high buildings of New York. What was it they were building here? Half waking and half sleeping, the images of what I had seen kept rising pell mell in my dreams, and confusedly I grappled for some meaning in it all. But things looked black to me that night. If war were hell and nothing else, one might have hoped that in sheer disgust men would learn their lesson and this struggle would be the last. But I saw little hope of this disgust—for I had seen what Max had called the flashes from the soul of war, its iron grip on the souls of men. Millions of them would forget the dreariness, the weariness, the icy mud, the stinking death, and in after years would remember only the glory and the thrills. Such men would not want disarmament.

"And who are you," a great voice asked, "to talk to these men of my ugliness? What have you in your little life ever known that can call to men as I call, pulling them out of their creeds and greeds to give up their lives by the millions, to shake the entire civilized world? There are many shams, many idols of peace, that will come down before I am through. You will have to be sure of what you believe before you can stand against me—sure as you never were before. For things are going to crash, these days, and the world is going to be reborn."

Just before daylight we got up and started down the narrow lane. Already the stars were growing faint and the pools of water on the fields slowly turned to silver. Masses of wagons, horses and men were still crawling over the landscape, as they had crawled all through the night, and would crawl through weary years to come. As we reached our car and started on, the light grew steadily stronger—and uglier and drearier grew the world around us. It was Sunday morning. A little after sunrise, we met two peasant women in black picking their way toward a village church. They stepped into the ditch and glared at us as our car spattered mud upon their clothes. Suddenly I remembered the millions of women in empty homes; and I wondered what they were thinking—what they were going to teach to their sons?

. . . .

5.

All through the spring and into the summer I stayed on in Germany, and I paid frequent visits to Steve and Dorothy in those months. Meanwhile the gas attacks had begun, and I remember clearly still an intense discussion with Dorothy in which she defended her husband's work as a means of ending the slaughter and of making war impossible for the generations to come. I could feel that for my cousin it had become a nightmare now. She had lost her eagerness to make me see the German side. Waking and dreaming she was obsessed by one idea—to get it over and go home. To go to America with Max and help him take up his old work—that was the goal on which she had turned homesick eyes. There was no doubt of her loving him now.

Then one day they brought him in on a stretcher from the train. He had contracted typhus during his work on the eastern front. For several weeks his life hung in the balance, Steve watching him like a brother, and Dorothy barely leaving his side. I came there on a visit when he was convalescing; and I can remember him vividly still—propped up in his bed, his face thin and pallid with hollow cheeks, something softened in his smile, and a new gentleness in his eyes. He was like a man come through a fire in which his spirit had been purged, his vision cleared. Much of what he told me then I have long since forgotten; but often in a startling manner, late at night in this silent room, I seem to hear him speak again—at times in a tone precise and sure, again in a groping searching way—of the change that had come over him.

"Before the war," he told me, "I was a man with one idea—to stop the waste of human life. But what a ruthless world it was. It was over there in your mines and mills that I learned to know the deadly work of the gases we are using now. Your countrymen are indignant now, but then they did not seem to care how many thousands were choked to death—and for me the world of peace became a dark jungle of complications. So war was like a dazzling flash, and its stark simplicity blinded me. Here almost in a moment was a world on a higher plane—men lifted out of their selfish lives. But now I am changed. In a year I have seen too much of its horror, the ruin and havoc in humble homes, the unscrupulous scheming in the high places. There is a deep falsity in it all. It has been not food but brandy. We must get back to a world of peace—in spite of its perplexities. We must find tolerance again, and as brothers all together we must work our problems out, slow and toilsome though it be. I put my hope in Science acting through a wider and more generous education upon all the ignorant masses of humanity, upon a new generation with these hatreds left behind.

"I do not believe that the war will end in any lasting dominance by the drill-masters in Berlin, or in Paris or in London. I believe it has let loose forces which will rise against those gentlemen and throw off their despotic rule. You talk against our gas attacks—but they are only a first step in developments more startling. Let the drill-masters plan as they please. We men of science, whom they despise, are going to kill the thing they love. We shall invent such instruments for the annihilation of life, that to the blind foolish people of all countries we shall demonstrate that war is no longer possible—and so this butchery will stop. But I do not like to think," he said, "of our drill-masters in Berlin in the first brief years of their triumph. For they will seem to triumph at first—before the new forces against them rise—and in those brutal rigid years I don't want to live in this country. It will not be my Germany, it will be theirs. How they will rule! They will claim all the credit for winning the war. In their blindness they will crush us down—the scientists, the thinkers—without whose aid they would have been beaten."

In his own case this prophecy was realized with a tragic abruptness. Long before he was fully recovered from his serious illness, he received a telegram ordering him back to his work. And a few weeks later, from that building in Berlin with the big red velvet curtain, a post card came to Dorothy telling of her husband's death.

Steve wired to me the same day. When I came I found her in her room, and at sight of her face I went to her quickly.

"Oh my dear girl—I'm so sorry!" I whispered. She was shaking in my arms. But only for a moment. Then she drew away and said, in a low hard unnatural voice,

"It was murder—nothing but murder, you know. They couldn't wait till he was out of bed. They just took him and killed him. No need at all. Just plain stupid German tyranny!" She stopped for a moment, and then she asked, "Will you help me now to get home, Larry? I hate this country—I hate war. I want to be back at Seven Pines."

I promised I would take her home. But first there was his funeral. And so long as I live I shall not forget that bleak Prussian village where Max Sonfeldt had been born, and where on that October day his people laid him in the earth.

The village was a small affair of some forty houses, most of them of brick and white plaster, straggled along a broad main street which was a slough of water and mud. Above were heavy autumn clouds. The bare trees on either side were blown by a raw cold wind from the North. We went to the home of Max's father, who ran both the savings bank and the general store of the village. We found him in the rear of his store, in a small stuffy dwelling-room but half heated by a stove. He was a harsh old Prussian, with short bristling gray hair and beard. His little blue eyes were cold and unfriendly. He had not approved of his son's marriage, and since then he had grown to hate the very name of America, the country which was supplying munitions to all Germany's foes. His wife came in, a stout old woman dressed in black. Her face looked red from crying, and it quivered violently as she took Dorothy's hand and led her into another room. Steve and I were left with the father. For a time he spoke of his son's death and his own undying hate of England.

"Now in a few minutes the funeral will begin," he said. "I must ask you to excuse me. My wife will need me by her side. On the march to the church," he added, "the widow will go with us." He paused a moment. Then he asked, "Will she return to America?" When we told him that she would, he nodded grimly and opened the door.

We walked to the small village square. In the middle rose a monument, a stark granite column with a brazen eagle overhead. Close by was an old Lutheran church, a long low building of gray stone with a heavy square tower at the front. Life stirred on the village street. It was a Sunday morning. Old men in queer-shaped tall silk hats began gathering on the commons. Most of them wore medals. With bearded faces harsh and set, these old Prussian countrymen looked what they were, shrewd hard-working farmers who had spent their entire lives struggling with a stubborn soil and had wrung a living out of it. Some had fought in France as boys, and the medals glittering on their chests took on a grim significance. Some women and children had gathered, too, but they had formed a group of their own which kept to the other side of the street. The bell began tolling. A man arrived, bearing an iron funeral wreath; and in the meantime up the street came a thin old man with a white mustache. At sight of him all the men formed in line. He faced them for a moment, issued a sharp order, and they went marching down the street to a house not far away. They came back with a large black-eagle flag and went to the old merchant's house. The pall-bearers went inside. Presently they came out with the coffin, followed by Max's parents with Dorothy between them; and slowly they made "the march to the church."

It was a cramped and narrow place. On both sides were galleries of ugly varnished yellow wood. Little gusts of chill raw air came sifting in through the high windows. The organ had begun to play, and the old men in the front rows began to sing in harsh thin voices. Now in this freezing holy place I could see the breaths of the women around me, and these little clouds of breath began to grow unsteady.

I caught a glimpse of Dorothy's face. She sat rigidly staring up at the pastor, who in his long black gown had risen and begun his address. He spoke of Max, the boy they had known, of his childhood in the village. He spoke of "the bereaved young widow" and of "the mother of the deceased." Thousands of brave men, he said, had given their lives for the Fatherland, and many thousands still must die for the sake of their country and their God. And this was hard and terrible. But their cause was just. I saw my cousin look sharply down; then she stared up at him as before. Among the German mothers and wives the tiny clouds of breath were coming still more unsteadily now, and I could hear some of them sobbing. Again my cousin bowed her head.

He finished and began to pray to "the great all-seeing God" for aid against the Russians and the French and English. When the prayer was over, they began to sing a hymn which since the outbreak of the war had been sent from Berlin to churches throughout the entire land to be used in such services. "What God does is well done," was the refrain.

At last it was over. We left the church and on the village commons outside we gathered on the muddy ground around the granite monument. There on a copper plate were the names of men killed in the Franco-Prussian war. The name of Max Sonfeldt had been added to the list. The thin old man with the white mustache, who had fought in 1870, came forward and spoke to the people. And then the men took off their hats and stood with bare heads in the cold wind. All faces turned to Dorothy, as the big iron wreath was placed in her hands. She had been told of this in advance, and I could feel her brace herself. Quickly she came and placed the big wreath at the base of the monument. As she stepped back she swayed a little. I drew quickly near her in the crowd, but by a slight motion she kept me away. She had vowed she would go through with this exactly as his parents wished.

"He would want me to," she had said.

Now they were marching off to the grave. We followed them; but looking back during a pause in the slow march, I saw on the empty commons only that granite monument, with the brazen eagle on top glaring down voraciously upon the names on the copper plate—like some savage idol of long ago.

When the burial was over, after a brief sobbing goodbye from the stout old woman in black, Dorothy was given back to us, and we took her to the train. What a relief to be alone. At first she sat by the window staring out at the windswept trees—but racking my brains for some way of relaxing the intensity in her eyes, I remembered a letter from Aunt Amelia which had come the day before. I laid it upon Dorothy's lap. In a few moments she noticed it there. She began to read—and read it through. She read it through a number of times.

In Berlin the next day, at our embassy I had trouble in getting her passport. We had planned to go through England, and she was a German citizen now. At last the trouble was arranged. We left Steve to go back to his hospital and set out on our journey home.

On the voyage back across the Atlantic she kept to her cabin most of the time. There was little I could do for her. And as I tramped the decks alone I grimly tried to clear my thoughts, get some perspective on it all. But mine was gloomy thinking. The thought of her disaster was ever there before me; and the memories arising out of my year in Germany kept piling up and gathering into one impression—of an overpowering force, precise and systematic, rigid, hard, relentless. How long could humanity stand the strain? I thought of how Max before his death had begun to rebel against it all. I thought of the dramatic critic and the lean workman on the train, and of that chap on the hospital bed who had shaken his fist at the priest. I remembered the Galician peasant who had begged for his old boots—and I wondered if he had found his cows. In those wide regions of despair, what bitter feelings must be brewing! Or had all power of revolt been crushed out of their hearts and minds? Was the thing too prodigious for any rebellion? Were men to become mere fatalists, slaves?

The thing kept spreading, spreading. Would America come in? The ocean, dark and empty, seemed to me to answer, "No." But I began to feel that we must. There was nothing else for us to do.

CHAPTER XIV

1.

"LARRY," said Aunt Amelia, in a voice stern with anxiety, "I'm afraid that it is going to be very hard for Dorothy here."

We had been home but a few hours. Dorothy had gone to bed. Her mother had been with her but had now come down to me, and in response to her searching questions I had told her all I knew—from my talks with Dorothy in Berlin through to the village funeral. When I spoke of how they had made her place that iron wreath on the monument, I saw my aunt's face grow harsh with pain; and suddenly as I looked at her then I realized that she was an old woman, past her seventieth year. Her head bobbed nervously at times. But there was something indomitable in the expression on her face, and in her questions a poignant tone that made me feel how she had gathered her energies for this supreme struggle of her life. Emersed in the war in the last year, my thinking had grown impersonal; but I was back in the family now, with its small deep intimate life, and I began to realize what a struggle this would be. Our country drawn inexorably into the Great War's bitterness, the people here growing tense and strained—and Dorothy the wife of a German, loyal to his memory. The facts were grim.

My aunt's low voice broke in on my thinking:

"Did she love him?"

"Yes and no. I think it was more pity than love." And I went on to give details. "She mothered him," I ended. Dorothy's mother frowned and said, "That feeling can go very deep."

The words sent my thoughts leaping back to the years when we had been children here—and then ahead into Dorothy's future. How was it going to be in this house?

"But think what kind of a girl she has been!" Quickly I ran back over her life—her buoyancy, impulsiveness, warm interests, vitality. As I talked I must have grown intense. I caught her mother watching me with a curious gleam in her eyes.

"Larry, I'm counting on you," she said. "What Dorothy needs is a chance to forget—and I mean that she shall have it. But it will not be easy. For very soon she is going to feel that half at least of her old friends and the greater part of her family already look on her as a disgrace, a blot upon the family name—because she married a German."

"Even now that he's dead?" I asked. Again her voice was sharp and strained.

"You have no conception of how they feel! Wait till you talk with them!" she said. "It began with the Lusitania!" She broke off. Her head was bobbing. She steadied herself and looked at me: "How do *you* feel, Larry? Do you think this country should enter the war?"

I hesitated, watching her. I recalled her words, "I'm counting on you."

"Yes," I said. She flinched a little:

"What are your reasons?"

As I tried to explain, I could feel her mind on Dorothy still, as though at everything I said her forebodings grew more clear.

"Still I am against it," she said steadily at the end. "The Lusitania—Belgium—Serbia—I know all that. I've heard so much—month by month—while her letters gave me the other side. But I can't believe they will go on. I think of those Germans I knew so well back in Wisconsin—long ago."

"But they were revolutionists—driven out by the same autocracy that is ruling Prussia today," I said. I saw her hands clinch tight in her lap. Her face was pale.

"Oh Larry," she said softly, "I'm bitter—bitter against them now! . . . But how can you be sure their people won't rise? Is bitterness the only way? I've been re-reading Lincoln's life."

"He went to war," I said gently.

"Yes—and we may again." Her look went back half a century. "The flags may have to come out," she said. "But they're terrible flags."

There was a pause, and then she asked,

"Have you told Dorothy how you feel?"

"No——"

"Please don't. Wait till you have been here awhile. I'm counting on you, Larry, to help me give her that chance to forget."

. . . .

2.

The next night in my father's house in town I was made to feel how hard it would be. With Dad himself this was not so. He said he was sorry for Dorothy and then went on to speak of the war.

"The plain fact of the matter is," he said, "that we are being kicked in the face—have been for the last two years. And as soon as we get a President who'll open the nation's eyes to that fact, we are going in to finish this war—finish it good and plenty. The only thing to worry about is whether or not we'll be in time." With keen interest he began to ask me questions as to Germany's strength. I was surprised at the knowledge he showed of the making of shells. "I'm making 'em now at the mills," he explained.

But we were interrupted there by Aunt Fanny and her daughter, Louise; and at once the atmosphere grew tense with the spirit of inquisition. I could feel them both impatient to get through all talk of such tiresome things as food supplies, shells, petrol, guns, and come to the question of Dorothy, who had disgraced the family name. But I parried their questions for awhile. I wanted to get their view of all this.

Louise was a tall pretty blonde with rather irregular features but her mother's violet eyes. Nearly twenty-three years had passed since the night when she had been brought into the world by plain Steve, "the stable boy." But there had been nothing plain since then. A small fortune had been spent on her dress, her health, her complexion, her "breeding," her "simplicity." She had "come out" the year before. But how different from the debutantes with whom I had danced ten years ago! For Louise like her mother was "in the war" and could talk or think of nothing else. Enthusiastic workers for various ultra-fashionable pro-Ally organizations, they had taken the war ardently into their small glittering world and there had made it glitter, too. War was the fashion. War was a pageant, a thing of romance, of titles, decorations, uniforms of many kinds and national costumes for bazaars. What had they to do with the poor dirty devils I had seen in the mud of the trenches, or gasping their lives away on rough cots? What did these women really know? They loved to hear of atrocities, if committed by "the Boches"; but when in reaction against their talk I started in to tell them of the Galician peasant whose feet had been frozen and cut off, Aunt Fanny interrupted.

"I hope you are not planning to publish such stories, Larry," she said. "They may do a great deal of harm—rouse sympathy for the German side. It's perfectly senseless to attempt to make any distinction whatever between the German Government and the German people," she went on decisively. "It's the German people

—every single one of them—who are killing those poor boys in France!"

"For my part," cried young Louise, "I'll never speak to a German again! I wish they were all wiped off the earth—every man and woman and child!" I said I did not feel that way. "Why not?" Louise demanded. Then they tried to make me confirm the hideous things they knew to be true about the people in Germany. And when in my answers I refused fully to satisfy their demands, and in my obstinate mood that night I even went on to mention all the good points I could think of in the German nation, I could see them give me up. Obviously I was a "pro-German"—another disgrace to the family name.

They were coming now to Dorothy.

"I'm afraid," said Aunt Fanny gently, "that you have let your sympathies be influenced by Dorothy's trouble —and her views."

I pulled myself together then. I remembered what Dorothy's mother had said. How to make these women leave her alone?

"Oh Dorothy," I said quietly, "is bitter enough against Germany now." I could see they did not believe me.

"In what way?" inquired Louise. "Does she feel that we should go into the war?"

"No—she hates the thought of war. She's against it all."

"I see," said Louise, in a tone which said, "Pro-German."

"What is she going to do?" from Aunt Fanny.

"Stay with her mother at Seven Pines—and try to forget. And if she's only left alone——"

"Where are you going to stay, Larry dear?" my young half-sister asked me.

"At Seven Pines."

"I see," she said. And what she saw was Dorothy helping me write such German lies as would serve the infamous aims of "the Boches."

Her brother came in, and for a few moments there was a truce in the attack. This youth was even more intense, but his talk ran on practical lines. He was twenty years old, and small and hard, with close-cut hair thick and black, and a little black mustache. He had left Harvard the June before, had gone to Plattsburg to harden up, and was drilling now two nights a week; he was working long hours in Dad's mills, and his talk was all of guns and shells. In his keen hungry Yankee way he was "cramming" for the fight. "I'm headed for the artillery." With him the war was no mere fashion but as real as mud and steel, and in comparison with the women there was a ring of honest thinking on his part that made me drop my obstinate pose and come out with my real attitude—which was that the German people, in spite of all their many good points, had got themselves into a state where they needed a licking and needed it bad, and that it was very plainly up to our country to go in. This cleared the atmosphere a bit, and from my new vantage point I tried again to do what I could for Dorothy. Once more I spoke of her bitterness against the war gang in Berlin. Young Carrington frowned when I spoke her name.

"How about Steve?" he inquired.

"He feels about as I do, I guess."

"Then why does he stay there?"

"Would you be in favor of cutting off our Red Cross work in Germany?"

"You bet I would!"

"Well, I guess you're right. We'll come to that in a few months more——"

"Months!" he snorted.

"And Steve will come home." There was a strained little silence.

"How about the chap she eloped with!" Carrington asked abruptly. I waited a moment.

"He's dead," I said.

"Yes, thank God. Did you see much of him?"

"Yes——"

"And was he against the war gang, too?"

"Yes." He looked at me sharply.

"How do you mean?" I tried to explain but he cut me short: "I see. You mean he was a pacifist. Then why the gas?"

I tried to explain that, too—and to my surprise he supported me there.

"That's all right enough," he said. "This talk of going easy in war and being nice and ladylike is all piffle," he declared. "Let 'em be as rough as they like. It'll make us rougher later on. But what makes me boil a bit is for a chap to let loose gas and pacifist talk at the same time! Where's Dorothy?"

"At home with her mother."

"I hope to God she stays there!"

"She will," I said intensely. "And her mother wants her left alone." I glanced at the women as I spoke.

"Well, I won't bother her," Carrington said. And then he and Dad took me off to smoke and question me farther on Germany's strength.

I stayed over night, and the next day my young half brother took me downtown to the great American banking firm which was buying munitions for England and France. As we entered the crowded lobby I stopped for a moment to look about. At once a man in a derby hat touched me on the shoulder and asked whom it was I wanted to see. Carrington promptly gave a name; and as we turned to the elevator, "Detectives all over the place," he said. "Taking no chances." Upstairs he had to see several men about a shrapnel contract; and interested at once to learn that I had been in Germany, these keen youngsters fired questions and in return they answered mine. They spoke of the "spirit" in their office and the wonderful system to eliminate profiteering. Ten per cent and nothing more.

"Seems sometimes," said one of them "as if every crook and shyster on the face of the planet were trying to get in his dirty work here. Nothing doing. Ten per cent, and a rigid inspection of the stuff. There's plenty of 'phoney stuff, God knows—but we have nothing to do with that. It's all being bought at enormous prices by the Russians and the Wops. England and France are buying through us, and our chiefs have let the word come down that there's to be no side money for any little mother's son in this whole place, from the roof to the cellar. We get tips on contracts which if used on the market would net each one of us thousands. See? But none of that. Not a dollar. This thing is rigid as the church. Whole war depends on it. That sort of talk."

Carrington and he were drilling in the same armory at night; and they spoke of the propaganda of the League to which they belonged. Listening I got an idea of small groups springing up in the East and even scattered through the West. But as I read the papers and talked with various friends of mine, I was made to feel that the main tides of sentiment in the country were still against going into the war. In coming home, I had dropped out. This was both a disappointment and a deep relief to me. Dorothy would have more time.

. . . .

3.

As I look back now on the months that followed, I think I can see how she would have recovered, if her mother and I had been able to give her that chance to forget. Too battered and dulled and tired at first to feel anything intensely, she seemed to settle with relief into this familiar home; and our anxiety dropped away. But as time wore on, the memories of the horrors she'd seen came back to her; and she grew restless, nerves on edge. In an instant without warning at some mention of the war, she would bite her lips, the tears would come and she would make quickly for her room. Her mother would find her on the bed and would try to soothe and comfort her, but she could not bridge the gap between. It was wide as the ocean we had crossed.

"Oh mother, mother—you don't know!"

Her mother turned to me for help. Again and again for hours together Dorothy would go over with me all those German memories; and feeling her warm loyalties for the man who was dead and her desperate gropings for something strong and real and true to hold to in her darkness, I was drawn to her as never before—not even in the days in Berlin. There was nothing "pro-German" about her now—for remembering what Max had said, at times she talked so bitterly of "the drill-masters" in Berlin, that even the bitterest anti-German would have been satisfied had he heard.

But this point of view was quickly changed when Dorothy was confronted by the attitude of Aunt Fanny, Louise and other relatives and friends. And this we could not keep from her long, for in her overwrought condition she insisted on seeing them.

"I want to know how they feel," she exclaimed, "and what can still be done over here to keep this country out of the war and help bring it to an end! If there's anything I stand for now, it is what Max believed in!"

With this loyalty, in her restless mood, she saw her friends and relations, and she read the papers every day. She found a readiness to believe anything horrible of "the Boches." The German people one and all were either grotesque imbeciles or fiends incarnate. To this attitude she reacted by passionately defending them.

"The German people are no worse than any others!" she declared. "And if such lies are being believed, it is our duty to tell the truth—just what we really saw over there!"

Apparently forgetting the quarrels we had had before, she seemed to take it for granted that I was for neutrality still. And this made it hard, for she counted on me. "You can reach millions with the truth!" To her this truth was the tragic contrast between the German Government and the blind driven people. So far I was ready to agree, but her next step I could not take.

"If America goes in," she said, "it will only prolong the fighting and keep in power the very men in each country who are to blame for it all! And the hating, hating, hating will start up all over again! The people are getting sick of it now, and if we only leave them alone they'll force their governments to make peace!"

"But any peace they can make now will mean that Germany wins," I said.

"Let them! What harm can it do?" she cried. "Those brutal idiots in Berlin are too stupid and blind to keep their power! Their own people will turn them out! As soon as their men get home from the army they'll make a government of their own!"

"I don't believe they will, my dear—not if Germany wins," I said. But in vain I tried to make her listen to my point of view. I can remember clearly still the desperate tortured look in her eyes, as dropping all efforts to argue she pleaded with me in intimate fashion, reminding me of the nights long ago when she had come down from college and gone about with me in New York, and I had given her my dreams of a brotherhood world wide.

"Oh Larry, to be like that again!"

It grew harder. I was bitter against Aunt Fanny and the rest who by their talk were forcing Dorothy into this position, while I by the inexorable trend of events in those anxious days was being forced the other way. Clashes came between us now, and this only made her the more intense. Her mother looked on but could do little She herself could feel she must soon take sides—perhaps against her daughter—and her suffering at such times of premonition made me try again to do my best to bridge the gap. But I cared for Dorothy in those days—in a way that made me, in spite of myself, argue with her—and we fought. Though the stories I was publishing made me a "pro-German" to my father's family, to Dorothy I was a traitor to the whole international cause.

At last I wrote an article in which I came out with my belief that America should go in. I showed it to Dorothy's mother. She read it and looked up at me.

"You're sure you must?"

"That's how I feel."

"Then please let her see it now. It will be worse if you publish it first."

But I doubt if it could have been much worse. Thank God I have forgotten the long talk with her that night —her outburst against "the haters—here and there and everywhere!"—and the way she begged me to destroy "these lies" that I had written. At the end she grew suddenly quiet and said,

"If you feel like that, please don't stay here."

. . . .

4.

I went to Lucy's the next day and was with her for some weeks, finishing my articles. But the thought of my cousin tormented me still. Lucy often went over there and came back and told me how one by one all Dorothy's friends were dropping away.

"And it is worse than that," she said. "For her mother's friends keep coming still—and they are getting the war point of view. They make it a matter of principle—and with Aunt Amelia you know what that means. I saw a look on her face last night that will haunt me to my dying day! She's struggling with her conscience so, and her old memories of the West in the days of the Civil War—and trying so desperately now to be honest and clear in her thinking. 'Lucy,' she told me, almost with a groan, 'it's like being Abraham, my dear—except that my Isaac is a girl, who needs me more than ever before since she was my baby'."

"She is counting on Steve," my sister went on. "Dorothy has talked so much about his calm neutrality, that I dread his coming home!"

"When is he due?"

"Next month, I think."

Steve's home-coming was delayed; but meanwhile another member of the family appeared, to drive my aunt a little farther on the path she dreaded so—though his aim was just the opposite. In March my cousin Ed arrived from his ranch in Nebraska. Strong as a bull, with heavy features and clear stolid practical eyes, he did not look like one easy to change. I remember the night when with his mother he came over to dine with Lucy and me.

"This country will never get into this fight," he declared decisively. "The whole West is dead against it. The farmers are more prosperous than they've ever been before—buying autos, and not Fords at that. And the patriotic yowls of these wealthy Wall Street leagues only make us more set in our minds. In order to pile up profits for them, we don't propose to lose billions of dollars and maybe millions of our boys in a fight we have nothing to do with. There are so many pros and cons to this war. There are so many foreigners out our way, and from them we hear both sides—we hear it till we're sick of it! To us it's all a tangle, a rotten diplomatic snarl! We can thank God we are out of it—and we propose to stay out, too! We're prosperous and contented; and there's not a chance on God's earth, or an argument, that can bring us in!"

"I don't agree with you, Edward!" said his mother sharply. We looked at her in surprise. Her lips compressed, her color high, she spoke in a stern unnatural tone. "If it does grow clear, as it may, that this war is really for justice and liberty all over the earth, the West will certainly respond. The West is deep in its real devotions—it takes time to 'rouse that side. But if it ever is aroused, then neither its prosperity nor any such selfish motive as that—nor even the lives of its dear sons—will keep it from following the flag—as it has always done before!"

He looked at her in blank dismay. In spite of his heaviness, Ed was very fond of his mother. Some inkling of the trouble ahead came into his thinking.

"What will Dorothy say to this?" he asked in a low anxious tone. "If we ever should get into this——"

"Not now!" She stopped him with her hand. "I won't face that till I'm sure," she said. "It may still be that you are right. But I cannot and will not sit still," she ended, with another stern glance at her son, "and allow the West to be described simply as a prosperous land!"

The family confab soon broke up; but there were other family talks, in ours and countless other homes throughout the land in those groping days; and the balance swung this way and that. Steve came back late in the spring; and at once, as I had been before, he became the target for questions from the family. Tommy had come home from school. Huskier, harder, tougher, it seemed as though the boy had grown a foot in the year since I'd seen him last. His left arm was in a sling. "Hockey," said Tommy briefly. With his big homely freckled face all aglow with eagerness he fired questions at his Dad; and the rest of us did the same. As Steve quietly tried to answer us all, a quizzical look was in his eyes; but then with a grim expression he said,

"I don't like the Germans—never did—but no one who honestly faces the facts can be there and not admire the way they're making their resources count. It's a damnable miracle, that's what it is—damnable because it's wrong. It's all so clearly for the sake of forcing our whole civilization into the most infernally scientific systematic comfortable slavery that the world has ever seen. I don't believe you people here even dream of what a danger there is that we'll be driven into that—unless America does her share!"

Three little personal tragedies—or rather, their beginnings—flashed out for a moment then.

"You mean we ought to fight, Dad?" Tommy asked, in a queer tense voice. Steve turned with a start and looked at him.

"Yes, son, I think we should," he said.

The next instant I saw Lucy's hand close like a vise on Tommy's arm.

And then I heard Aunt Amelia ask,

"Are you sure of that, Steve—absolutely sure?"

She had risen—rigid, quivering. Steve went to her and took her hand.

"Don't you want me to go home with you now? I want to see Dorothy," he said.

"Thank you, Steve."

He took her home; and when he came back to us that night, he said quietly,

"I had a long talk with them both, and at least the suspense is over. Dorothy knows that her mother is for our going into the war—and she knows how we feel—and she admits that there is some sense in our point of view—as I admit there is in hers. As soon as I can, I've promised to take her out to her brother's ranch. In the meantime you'd better leave her to me. She's a case for a neurologist now. That's what these so-called patriots who fight their battles all at home have succeeded in doing to her," he said.

. . . .

5.

So in millions of family groups the discussions went on through the summer; and in at least a million homes were people who felt as Dorothy did. That is what the people of France and England will never understand. In the autumn I had a chance to see the result of these numberless arguments. For long before this the idea for a play dealing with Germany in the war had come into my head; and soon the old play fever had me once more in its grip. I tried to be fair to the Germans still; but the arrogant tyranny of Berlin kept crowding into all my scenes; and the more I wrote the deeper grew my feeling that, if Germany won, it was goodbye to democracy or peace or progress in the world for many generations to come. Moreover, in rehearsal the actors got out of control. The British hero insisted on being all hero, while the villain from Berlin would be nothing but double-dyed. And so, watching the crowded houses to which we played in small cities and towns was like feeling the pulse of the country, at least in the East. And even the East that autumn showed itself still balancing. Though the villainous Prussians were properly hissed, even by the gallery, I saw many that smiled at the hisses or whispered angrily to their friends; while as for the British hero, the applause was dangerously light, and his lines were even greeted at times by a few titters or even a laugh. But among the well dressed New Yorkers who came to our play on opening night, there was no such neutrality. The house went wild against Berlin; and the British hero, with a French and Belgian victim upon either side of him, responded to such curtain calls as made my anxious manager chuckle and clap me on the back.

I went out then to Seven Pines. Dorothy had already gone west and was slowly getting herself in hand; but as the great crisis drew steadily closer, her mother's worries for her increased. The Christmas gathering that year was a good deal of a mockery. The future was dark, unsettled, confused. Tommy alone was in high spirits. He told how some of the boys at school had already formed a company. His mother sharply cut him off. I could see her watch him anxiously. Aunt Amelia, still unbeaten, with a plucky attempt at her old smile, but with a slight tremor in her voice, said at the end of the evening,

"I hope that when next Christmas comes, the world will be happier, my dears."

But now for me all personal feelings were lost in the deepening national strain. As the messages went back and forth between Washington and Berlin, I could feel the pulse of the nation beat with a swifter warmer throb. I saw other plays like mine playing to crowded houses. The bookshop counters were piled high with war books of every description. The newspapers seemed nothing but head-lines. Flags appeared in front of some houses; and when I went out to dine, people could talk of nothing but war. Yet still there were forces holding us back. I went to many crowded halls down in the tenement sections and found a sea of passions there. Bitter pro-Germans spoke their contempt for the many German-Americans "running to cover" on every side; Irishmen shouted furious orations on the "British tyrants"; Jews declaimed against the Czar; Socialists of every race hung doggedly to their creed of the past and thundered the old Marxian phrases into the on-rushing storm. It was the same in the meetings of the patriots uptown. The thinkers were being forced to the rear; the shouters had the platforms. But under all the surface where these little pigmies stormed, I could feel the tides beneath steadily forcing us into the conflict. What all the leagues engineered from New York had failed to effect with their warnings, the President of the United States was now swiftly bringing about by an appeal to the old ideals of liberty and justice, together with the summons to a crusade to end all war and make the world safe for democracy. This perhaps would not have succeeded, had not the Imperial Government hastened the process by a display of such contempt for America, such blatant open assurance that we could not count in time, that the Yankee fighting blood was roused.

"To *hell* with those damned Dutchmen!"

This summed up the gist of it for many exasperated men. Even Ed's letters from the West showed a disturbed uncertainty and a deepening wrath against the Germans for "acting like such pig-headed fools." Even the people out his way were getting sick of it, he said. Every day it grew more sure. America was going in. And then goodbye to the morale of the German people, I told myself.

With this hope I tried to allay the anxiety of my aunt. She had fully made up her mind to the war—but how would it be with Dorothy? My cousin was still with her brother out west, but even the West was changing now; and we saw deeper complications ahead if the fighting should go on to the days when American boys from all over the land were upon the firing line. When the lists of killed and wounded arrived, how would they treat "pro-Germans" here? Resolutely my brave old

Aunt Amelia put such fears aside and held grimly to the hope that the war would come to an early close. In this hope I supported her. The German people could never hold out. By autumn we should see the end.

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6.

But the vast struggle overseas, ever widening and changing, with startling new developments, now gave to little men like me another of its mighty jolts—brought me up with a jerk, as it were, upon the edge of a precipice and grimly bade me look again into the strange years ahead.

I was lunching at my club one day when suddenly the word went 'round that the Russians had risen against their Czar. In a moment the whole room was a-buzz, as eagerly we launched upon a new ocean of war-guessing. In our state of mind, those days, determined to make all news good, we were soon assuring each other that nothing better could have been imagined. High time those chaps got rid of their Czar and built up a free country like our own. Moreover, the Czar and his court had been pro-German to the core. This revolt was led by men who proposed to carry the war straight through to a finish; in Petrograd a strong group was already in the saddle. Yes, decidedly we approved of this Russian revolution! It cleared the issue so nicely just as we were coming in. For the dark old Russian government had been an embarrassing ally. . . . But at crowded meetings large and small in the foreign sections of New York, I was given an impression of the Slav upheaval which would have shocked my countrymen. This was no mere bourgeois *coup d'etat* to help the Allies against Germany. This was the blow-off of the lid; this was to be a rising against all bourgeois governments in every country on the earth, to sweep the capitalists aside and bring the proletariat of the world into its own! Talk like this I heard down there; and discount it though I did, I could feel that the Great War had changed. Risen to a climax in that rigid system I had seen in Germany, now it was apparently about to swing to the other extreme. Old memories rose up in me of the socialist dream for mankind. How much of it was possible? How much was possible in this way—all at jump—through violence?

But events here followed thick and fast, and I had no time for Russia now. I remember taking the President's big war speech off the ticker one night. That settled it—we were in at last. I went down to the crowded streets below. People from the theaters were hurrying as usual along Forty-second Street to catch the suburban trains. I heard or saw few signs of excitement. The newspaper vendors along the way shouted extras into their faces, and snatching the papers the crowds hurried by. Suddenly I remembered those other crowds on the *Friedrichstrasse,* hurrying, hurrying, hurrying, each intent on his little affairs, while the old woman had flourished her papers and screamed, "The Future!" at them. The future—what would it be?

I turned into Park Avenue, walked a few blocks and then stopped short—for through the open window of an old-fashioned red brick house came the sound of a piano and voices singing a marching song of the Civil War. I thought of Aunt Amelia. "The flags may have to come out again. But they're terrible flags." In front of the houses down the street they hung motionless in the still night air. The street was almost empty. Only a dump cart passing by.

In my father's home I found the family gathered around young Carrington and two of his friends, with whom he was discussing the merits of three army rifles which were passed from hand to hand. His face was set in an eager scowl. Young Carrington was practical.

His thoughts were bent on how to "get over" just as soon as possible. On account of his previous training he felt sure of getting into the first officers' training camp, and he had a hundred things to attend to. When his friends were gone he rapidly unloaded various business details on Dad, who was plainly proud of his son. Then my young brother turned to me.

"How about you, Larry?" he asked. "What are you planning?"

"I haven't decided."

"How old are you?"

"Forty-two." The youngster looked at me critically.

"You might have a chance," he said. "But the hell of it is that in your case they would probably keep you on this side."

"Oh, I'm not so sure of that," I replied. The fact was that the idea of enlisting had never entered my head till then. But this night was rapidly changing things—and besides, I was decidedly peeved to have this youngster so obviously lay me on the shelf.

"Once you're in," he reminded me, "they've got you, and you lose your chance of making any choice of your own. You'd hate to get stuck at a desk job in the army over here. While as a correspondent," he added, "you've got a name and you're needed in France. You can get right across and see the whole show."

"I'm getting sick of *seeing* things," I retorted doggedly. And this idea of enlisting began to take hold in the next few days. At my club I found that scores of my friends were asking the same question: "How about me?" The war had become abruptly a personal matter to each one. Some bored me with their pros and cons. Others kept their thoughts inside, but you could see it in their eyes. Quite a few looked veritably tortured. With me it did not get that far. I was six-feet-two, thin, stoop-shouldered, with long bony wrists and hands—and when I tried to see myself dolled up as a fighting man, my sense of humor entered in. Besides, what I did seemed so unimportant. All my life I had been a watcher; and there were such big things happening now, events following one another pell mell. More and more I had a sense of being swept along on the tide. Let my own little future take care of itself.

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7.

I had a telephone call one day from the editor of my paper.

"How about going over to France and seeing our first preparations there?"

"It doesn't appeal to me."

"How about Russia?"

"I'm thinking of that."

"Good. Come down and talk it over."

"All right—in a day or so."

But the days passed and I did not go. The two plans kept pulling opposite ways—to go to Russia and see all that, or to quit my writer's job and get into the army, lose myself. Already quite a few men I knew were reading army manuals and cramming up on how to fight; and to keep that path still open I joined a training corps in town. I remember the first drill night in a big shadowy armory. Several thousand would-be officers had already come into the hall, paid five dollars and entered their names, and were crowded against the walls, some with serious faces, others with fixed unnatural smiles, while a few score officers and non-coms from the regular army shouted out orders.

"All those men who drilled last week go down to that end of the hall!"

"Come on," said the fellow next to me, an angular alert little chap who had just remarked that this was his first evening. "Let's take a chance and bluff it out! We'll get on faster!"

We moved down to the end of the hall, where amid quick shouted orders many platoons were being formed. In half an hour the whole hall was a mass of marching men. And to the sharp, explosive, "Right—left!" of the officers, and the heavy tramp of feet, an American army was being born. But what an army! As my squad went by a huge gun, I saw two officers sitting on top and surveying us with quizzical looks. I smiled up at them, and the younger man smiled back in a way which made me say to myself in disgust,

"Fat chance I have of getting across. I'll get in and there I'll be—sidetracked somewhere in a camp—while over in France the fighting ends, and in Russia the whole radical movement of the world will be settled one way or the other! I'll miss that too!"

But tramp, tramp all over the hall. I was in the spell of it again.

I remember a lovely afternoon out on Governor's Island. The big bare aviation field jutting out into the harbor was dotted with small groups of men marching about with wooden guns. "Rest!" cried our sergeant abruptly. We wiped off the sweat and talked for a while. There were sixteen of us, mostly clerks. The wiry little man on my right turned out to be a dentist.

"This is the biggest thing I've seen," he confided earnestly, "since I left Peoria."

On my left was a stout youth with a good-natured freckled face, who said,

"I'm out here because of the boss. He told the whole office this morning that anyone who'd come out and drill could always get his afternoons off. And that's me," he added with a wink. "Why not? It's pleasant weather. And I dunno but what I'll enlist. Maybe I will and maybe I won't. But say—ain't we a peach of an army?"

My eyes followed his out over the field, and watching those awkward little squads I remembered the regular tides of men I had seen sweep by in Germany. How could we hope to get ready in time? As the sun sank into the haze of the west we heard the boom of the sunset gun. Then a bugle call. "Attention!" The word was shouted far and near. And a moment later all over the field those several hundred pigmies stood rigid as so many pegs—hats off—while in the distance the band played the national anthem.

"Gee!" said the little dentist. "That got me!"

It was only a few days later that my editor called me up:

"Look here, I'm getting tired of this. When are you coming down to talk?"

I went to see him late that night. The paper was already going to press. He came out in his shirt sleeves, with a contented scowl on his face, his gray hair tumbled, pipe in his teeth.

"Come on into my den," he said, and there he soon got at my indecision. "Don't be a damn fool, Larry," he urged. "The war can't last long, now we're in it—their whole show will soon break down. And all that you'll get out of it will be a health cure here in camp. You'll have thrown away your one big chance—which is to go to Russia, son. You're fitted for that, it's right in your line—you've mixed with the Reds and know their game. Go over and get under the skin of what they're really doing there. That's what we all want to know. What are they up to? What does it mean? This thing is bigger now than war. If in Russia, why not somewhere else? God only knows where it'll stop. Come on, now, look at it sensibly."

That week a long letter came to me from my old friend Oberookoff. In the most extravagant terms he described the glories of the great new soul of Russia now—all factions uniting, quarrels ending, gloom and suspicion and despair and bitterness all swept away in a dazzling tide of hopes and dreams. Russia—freedom—justice—brotherhood—a queer new world. How much of it was really true?

I started for Russia early in June.

"Oh, Larry," said Aunt Amelia, with a shining light in her eyes, "what a tremendous experience you are going to have, my dear!"

CHAPTER XV

1.

The Russian Revolution, that sombre vast adventure, is so far from finished still, its measureless possibilities for the happiness or the misery of all humanity so obscure, that I can get no large clear view. With some men this is not so. They feel they can speak with authority; and taking one side or the other, they are quite sure about it all. As a rule they have never been in Russia, but this does not hamper them; they take all the bad or all the good they hear of the Soviet Regime—the rest they disdainfully throw aside, and so building their high mountains, they look down with clear superior eyes. But each of us has his own mountain to build; and in these times of censorship, of passion, prejudice and lies, the humbler mountain builders have not yet raised their little hills high enough to see over the trees. So at least it has been with me. I look back into Russia and I see a dark prodigious tumult—with blinding flashes, dazzling vistas—then again clouds. What is happening there? Why did not these "civilized governments" send into Russia long ago hundreds of fair-minded men really equipped to get the facts? There are so many things I want to know! I am blind. I sit here and look back. I have but a chain of memories, impressions of a foreigner who without even speaking the language plunged into that stormy land.

But dreaming of my memories, gradually I have grown aware of the presence in this room of a few new figures, men and women, whom I met in the Great Revolution. Some I had almost forgotten. Strange how close they seem to me now, as with those other monitors they gather around me:

"Brother—the truth."

I will do the best I can.

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2.

Our small Norwegian boat was packed with Russian Reds returning home, and I struck up an acquaintance with a fellow in the steerage who had come from a Nevada mine. Years before as a boy he had escaped from a Siberian prison, crossed the Pacific, found work in the mines and had been pretty much all over the West. He spoke a broken choppy English. Stunted and tough, he was almost a dwarf; but he had friendly twinkling eyes, and the soul of him was big with dreams. He was not for peace with Germany.

"Fight the Kaiser—fight like hell—because if we don't, and Germany wins, he'll march right in with T. N. T.—and our whole revolution then won't be worth a God damn cent. Understand? We've got to fight till his people kick him off his throne and give him a job in the subway," he said. "Then give all kings and all rich people jobs in subways—understand?—at good fair wages. Treat 'em right—for they are fellows like ourselves—and they must have not any more, not any less—than all of us. If they work they can vote—if they don't they are bums. And so we fellows all together—miners too—will make a new world. No French Revolution—no chopping off heads—it's out of date. We'll do it right—we'll get together—plan it out—get everything running. No more wars, no diplomats, no people starving, no little kids dying, no more strikes. We won't get mad. Whenever we do we'll quit it. 'Now fellows be sensible, get together.' That kind of talk. We'll run the mines and railroads, and factories and cities, too—we'll plan it out. Slow work—understand

—all kinds of trouble. But by God, when we get through," he ended in a husky tone, "we'll have a world free from one end to the other!"

Months later when I met him, this chap was gaunt and worn to the bone, but his wide jaws were clamped like a vise. He was in a uniform dirty and torn; he had fought at first in the trenches, and later as the chaos spread he had gone along the front, speaking to crowds of mutinous soldiers, urging them to keep up the fight. A job where a man took his life in his hands. I wonder if he is living now?

As our ship with its load of dreamers sped up toward the midnight sun, it was as though all darkness were being left behind us. Vividly I remember one night. Just to the south were the Faero Islands, black, mountainous, rising out of the sea. To the north the great sun sank out of sight below the shining horizon, in a brief hour to rise again. There was not a breeze to ruffle the waters. The gleaming golden ocean took on iridescent hues that melted into those in the sky, until there was no dividing line between the heavens and the sea. All the world was bathed in color, strange, unreal, a mighty dream. In the steerage, a small group of men, and two women and a child, were at the rail staring off to the north. In low intense voices these men had been talking. One of the women stopped them now. And as they stared in silence at that golden ocean, there seemed to be a promise there of some distant golden age.

But the dream was brief. In a hard garish jumble come the memories of the next few days, as on crowded trains we went far up to the head of the Bothnian Gulf, ferried across to Tornea and so came to the Russian frontier. A fresh new glorious land of the free? No, a nation sick and tired, worn with its heavy heritage of war and tyranny behind. My first impression was like that. For as we waited for our train, I took a stroll along the tracks; and reaching far as I could see back into the forest were enormous piles of boxes, barrels, war supplies, machinery, food. They were sorely needed in Russia now, but the war and the revolution had broken the railroad system down. I heard the gay music of a band, and looking down to the ferry dock I saw a small group of Red Cross doctors and nurses there. Another boat had just come in; and in a few minutes, up the slope across the tracks to a line of box cars in the yard, came a long slow procession of ghastly figures, men and boys. A few of them hobbled along by themselves; more lay on stretchers, waxen-faced, mere skeletons, consumptives, cripples. They were from German prison camps, had been exchanged and were coming home, many to die, and all to add to the load of gloom, disease and despair that the war had bequeathed to the revolution. I heard one of them gibber as though insane.

I went back to the station and found the platform crowded now. Soldiers and trainmen with dull faces but intent and serious eyes were listening to the speeches shouted upon every side by my fellow travelers from New York. Certainly they had lost no time in getting into the argument! I learned that a railroad strike was just about to be called on this line. God only knew when we should get on. But this was nothing; the minds of the speakers had soared up to larger spheres. Land for the peasants, bread for the workers, peace for all! So shouted a little Bolshevik who had come over in the steerage, while a large angry Jewess who had come in the first cabin shook her Menshevik fist in his face, denouncing him as a German spy and a traitor to the socialist cause. Was there not already confusion enough? The only chance for socialism was to apply it with common sense and moderation, she declared. The gist of these speeches I managed to get through the little man from Nevada. I followed him down the platform to a group of trainmen there. He talked to them rapidly, earnestly. What about this railroad strike? He had no doubt that they were in the right—but why not let this one train start? Here was a big crowd of Reds come to help in the revolution. Let them get on to Petrograd! And there up the track were two hundred poor devils from the German prison camps, who would die if left in the woods.

"And they are fellows like ourselves. Give them a chance, brothers. Don't leave them here to die like dogs."

His words began to have effect. Finally it was voted that the train should be allowed to start. So, with our wheezing old locomotive and a long train of dirty cars —half of them filled with wrecks of the war, the other half with pioneers and prophets of the revolution— with puffs and pants and screeches of wheels, we pulled out into the yards, past those acres of war supplies, and started down through Finland into Holy Russia.

All the next day and part of the night we travelled on with many stops, and about one in the morning we came into Petrograd. The sun had not yet risen, and in a gray uncertain light we came out of the long low dirty station into an equally dirty square. Here was a row of small open hacks, all in a state of dilapidation, with huge wooden yokes over the necks of the wretched little horses. The drivers were all bundled up in thick wadded filthy clothes; like their horses, they looked dead with sleep. And in my tired mood that night the whole city seemed oppressed with the dirt and sin of generations. The very air was heavy with the wood smoke from the chimneys. With another correspondent I got into a little hack; and rattling over the cobbled streets between tall silent tenements we kept passing shadowy groups of men and women, boys and girls, who walked along talking in that strange tongue, their loud voices beating against the walls.

We came to the old *Hotel de France.* Grim greeting from the proprietor. The waiters and porters and chambermaids had gone on strike that day, he said. Wearily lugging our bags along we followed him up broad flights of stairs and through a dark smelly labyrinth of long narrow carpeted halls. In the room allotted to me, dirty water stood in the wash-bowl, empty bottles lay on the floor, and the bed had not been made. On the tumbled sheets lay an old pink corset. Peevishly I threw the thing into a dusty corner. I undressed and got into bed. Broad daylight now, the cold gray dawn. All Russia, I decided, was like the morning after. As I drifted into dreams, the bed grew larger, larger.

"This bed is Russia," I growled to myself. "Millions of people have slept in it, millions of people have lived in this room. And the dirty little chambermaid has swept everything under the bed. Nice birthplace for a clean new world."

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3.

On hot sultry days and nights I wandered down the Nevsky watching its tumultuous life—its ugly rasping trolley cars bulging with humanity, its dense street traffic crowding, crowding, countless little open cabs, army trucks and ambulance cars, long processions of peasant carts piled with sheep, hogs, bags of grain, mounted Cossacks with their caps stuck jauntily down over one ear. On either side this teeming way were slowly moving throngs of people—the dullness of civilian clothes relieved by gaudy uniforms and the garb of Gypsy women, monks and beggars, Black Sea sailors, Tartars, Georgians, many more—half the races of the planet, talking a harsh babel of tongues. Soldiers everywhere in the throng tramped along with slouching gait, a few saluting officers, more passing with derisive grins. No limousines, no liveries, no sparkle or dash of fashion here. Long lines of people at shop doors, waiting for a chance to buy a little sugar, bread, tobacco. Thinking of the revolution? Not by any manner of means. People scuttling for trains, mothers with children, mischievous boys, and prostitutes, and gay young people, chattering, laughing, crowded by. Happy people, scowling people, worried, peevish, busy people—each engrossed in his own affairs. In an open cab a woman passed with a tiny blue coffin in her arms. And at night, in one of the canals that intersect this thoroughfare, upon a barge piled high with logs I watched a peasant and his little son stolidly cooking supper over a stone fireplace in the stern of the clumsy craft. Faces quiet as the forests out of which those logs had come. And even the city seemed quiet that night.

But beneath this quiet I could feel the ever deepening suspense. The revolution was four months old; the first great burst of happiness and hope and faith was left behind; and while the government of Kerensky already tottered to its fall, every little citizen of the groping new republic asked, "What next? And what will it mean to me?" In a dark corridor of my hotel I came around a corner and nearly ran into a woman who was coming the opposite way. With a quick start and gasping breath she broke into violent sobs and went running down the hall. Just a woman with nerves? But I saw so many faces with nerves, not alone but in hundreds. On the street in an instant crowds would form. Loud furious talking, hysterical eyes—speakers arguing on all sides—some well-dressed and others ragged, men and women and even young boys, who flourished their thin little arms and pierced the din with their shrill cries. And before the newspaper bulletins stood throngs of people day and night reading the news from the Russian front, news of the widening revolt, strikes and upheavals of all kinds—Russia strained to the breaking point with the Great War and the Great Revolution—bursting out, then dying down. I thought of the crowds three years before upon the *Friedrichstrasse,* and of the old crone who had screamed the name of her newspaper into their ears. *Die Zukunft*—what would it be?

Suddenly there burst like a storm the first Bolshevist insurrection. All one sultry afternoon thicker and thicker gathered the crowds, until by night the Nevsky was packed for a mile with a black solid mass, through which in two narrow lanes rushed big trucks and automobiles bristling with bayonets, packed with students, workmen and soldiers, shouting and scattering proclamations over the heads of the multitude. Speakers ranted on all sides, red flags appeared by hundreds, songs were heard; and as night drew on, denser, denser grew the throng. All at once from just ahead of me the hard deep rattle of a machine gun started instant panic here, and I felt the wild power of the mob. No shrieks or calls, but rushing feet, the hiss of bullets overhead and the heavy crash of plate-glass windows as the frenzied people hurled themselves into the shops. Every fellow who had a gun seemed to be shooting at random now. I had thrown myself face downward, and others were flopping all about. Two landed right on top of me. In a moment I felt a hand grasp mine—and I swear I cannot tell you whether it was a man or a woman whose hand I held through the rest of the storm!

In a few minutes the firing ceased almost as abruptly as it began. Gone were the crowds, and on the curbs sat soldiers and workingmen in long lines quietly smoking cigarettes and talking things over. What a people! Again and again in the next few days did these street battles suddenly start—and as quickly end—till at last the Kerensky government once more got the upper hand. I lived in the streets—till one afternoon, in a cab with a friend, I heard him say,

"Hello, old man, what the devil's wrong?"

And then I pitched into his arms.

. . . .

4.

"It's the water and the black bread and all the rest of their rotten food," the English doctor told me. But he was wrong, for I have a digestion like a goat. It was the revolution. For a week I kept to my room, in bed at first and then at the window, glad to quiet down and rest. I re-read Kipling's "Kim" and smoked, and watched the life in the courtyard—a great square well with entry-ways like tunnels to the world outside. Here were enormous piles of wood, and in a slow and leisurely way two men were adding to the pile with logs brought in on huge wheeled carts. At an open window across the way a woman watered geranium plants; in another three Scotch Red Cross nurses sat chatting and laughing over their tea, and on Sunday sang "Lead Kindly Light." At a window just above them, a large black-bearded Russian in a red silk blouse sat smoking, and once in a rich baritone he sang some plaintive Russian airs. Below in the court from time to time the hotel 'bus would rumble in, and as the old driver unharnessed his horses he talked to them softly or made a whistling hissing sound. The deep voice of the city was a rough low hubbub here, but out of it came sudden voices, laughter, shouting, day and night.

What were they all up to? A turgid ocean of dreams out there, and hopes and passions, feuds and quarrels, surging up on every side, and extending out in wave on wave to the North of China, down to Persia. How could I dig into it all? Oh, for an interpreter and guide! There were plenty such to be had, but each was set on interpreting from his own little point of view—Bolshevik or Menshevik, Kadet or Czarist—take your choice.

"What I'm looking for," said one of my friends, "is just a simple plain damn fool."

I thought of Oberookoff. I wired to the small town where he lived, and at the end of another week he arrived to show me the revolution. He limped as he came into my room, for he had been badly wounded in the first year of the war. He looked much older; at forty-eight his hair was almost wholly gray. But he was still tall and powerful. With the old familiar genial smile, he lugged in an enormous bag, in which in addition to books and clothes there was a pillow and a blanket. He would sleep right here on the floor, he declared. He was so happy he all but hugged me. With tears in his eyes he poured out his questions about Steve and Lucy, Tommy and my Aunt Amelia. Then we came to the business in hand.

"Well—the revolution! It goes splendidly!" he cried. "We must not stay long in Petrograd, but go to Moscow—Russia is there! Then we shall go to the little towns and the villages. The deep Russia is there! Here it is like the funeral place of a weak sick unhappy old man. All the diseases are left in the room. The first joy of our freedom is gone—and in America you would say that in this city there is a great grouch. Men scheme and criticize till they are sick. Then they throw up their hands and say, '*Neechevo*'—which means, 'It is nothing. What is the use?' They are like that. They were made like that ever since they were born—by the bad education of their souls. For they got such a habit of criticizing the rotten government everywhere that they cannot lose this habit now, even when the government is one that they have made themselves. This bad habit they must lose. They must come together like sensible brothers, every man's spirit strong with faith—and they must push the government on. But this means education. We must start with the littlest kids. Schools by thousands must be built, and great splendid colleges, in every corner of the land. And these must send students all over the world to learn and make friends in other lands. Then wars will cease."

"But how about this war?" I asked "My newspaper keeps cabling. They want to know if Russia will fight."

"Of course we must fight!" Oberookoff declared. "We must fight to the last drop of blood! But what do you Americans know about the cost of fighting?" he continued sadly. "You have yet not even begun. Three years ago I was wounded. It is nothing. Most of my friends are dead. I saw them give their souls to God. We have given more blood than all the Allies—ten million killed or wounded, or dead of diseases and fearful plagues. But of course we must fight. If we do not, the Kaiser will spoil our revolution. We must fight till his people are free men. And we must make our own country so beautiful, so strong with work and strong with the happiness of all, that other nations will do the same—and then we shall come together as friends. But this means education," he repeated impressively.

He repeated it from time to time, all through those discouraging weeks we spent together in Petrograd. The deeper the chaos, gloom and despair, the warmer burned this villager's faith. He was wonderful, this "simple damn fool," this lame country teacher with his great dream. A child, a father, a kind quiet friend, bearing with all my impatience and irritable outbursts—I remember clearly still his homely face and smiling eyes. Often he seems to be here while I write. But I remember little or nothing of the men with whom we talked in the big government buildings. In dreary succession, they rise in my mind unreal as so many phantoms now. Some of them had been working hard for long weary baffling weeks, but they felt themselves so hampered and bound that they were ready to throw up their hands. For the great machine of government was hopelessly stalled; it would not start. On the one side, the prodigious confusion coming from the war; on the other, the swiftly deepening chaos of the revolution.

"How can we attend to both at once?" one official bitterly exclaimed. "Why do you Americans and French and English keep demanding of us only, 'Will you fight?' We have Russia on our hands—with a mighty revolution here! And to us and to you this is more vital even than the war itself. For if you will not help us now, this nation will go whirling down into such confusion as will spread like fire over the earth!"

So spoke these men who were vainly trying to hold the great rebellion back. Oh, for a sensible revolution! In those hot and stagnant weeks the practical Yankee soul within me boiled with exasperation at times. If only these queer people would get rid of their "great grouch," their *"neechevo,"* their shouted dreams clashing each upon the others; pick one radical scheme from the lot and give it a fair try, work it out—and meanwhile keep their armies a little longer at the front—a few months more and the world would be safe from the Kaiser's little dream for us all! But the mood would pass; and drawn again into the vortex close about, my mind would be held spellbound by this gigantic whirl of events, out of which a new world was being born.

. . . .

5.

I was watching now the Soviet. Late one afternoon we came to the rambling palace of yellow stucco built by Katherine the Great for one of her lovers long ago. There was a lovely park behind it, with a little lake; and in front was a courtyard, in which the grass and shrubbery had recently been trampled down. There were wings on either side this court, with huge columned porticoes. We entered between the bayonets of two soldiers there on guard, and went through to the Catherine Hall, long, immense, rectangular, with high narrow galleries on each side and lofty windows at the ends. Through these windows streamed the sunlight, and the shining paths it made were swarming thick with millions of tiny particles of dust, which rose like smoke from the chaos below, in which millions of bitter memories, passions, hopes, desires, dreams, had swarmed and whirled in these last months.

For the Great Revolution had centered here. Here, where in the days gone by the immense ballroom had been filled with the wealth and glitter and gaiety, the dancing, gambling, drinking of Russia in Great Katherine's time, now the common herd had come in; and the place still seethed and smelled and echoed with the dirt and din. Long lines of soldiers, their guns stacked, lay dead asleep upon the floor. Others were drinking tea or soup from huge pails and kettles, and eating chunks of black bread. Bits of food and refuse, rags and old papers still littered the floor; heavy animal smells hung in the air; and amid a harsh vibrating din, soldiers and sailors, workmen and peasants, tramped about or stood in a crowd which was being addressed by a pale-faced youth who shouted down from a stairway.

With difficulty getting a pass to the chamber where the Deputies met, I succeeded at last and took my seat, with Oberookoff beside me, in the small press gallery. It was a square low ceilinged hall. A skylight threw a soft gray light on the men below, in long semi-circular rows, a few of them writing or reading, some leaning back with cigarettes but more with elbows on their desks and scowls of absorption, listening hard to the man in the high speaker's box. This was the All Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies. Four hundred men in sober gray suits or in blouses white or brown or black. The broad white and blue collars of sailor suits gave some color here and there. To my surprise I noticed some fifty officers' uniforms; and nearly a third of the Deputies wore on their breasts the small white cross of the university graduate. Far from riotous, this crowd, intent and silent, listening to speeches which for the most part lasted but a few minutes each and were delivered in tense low tones.

Here was the real seat of government, the storm center of ideas. The life of a nation in fever surged into this old palace, and I grew absorbed in these messengers from the turbulent land outside. From cities, ugly factory towns, from villages buried in forests or scattered along rocky coasts or over the limitless rolling steppes, petitioners came clamoring in. What costumes! Men from all over the North of Europe and Asia seemed to be here! Whole delegations, in they marched. From mines and mills and factories, to demand that all these be given at once into the hands of the workers themselves. Down with the bosses! Why throw out the Czar, if the real tyrants were still to be left in control of the daily lives of the people? Others came from Finland, Esthonia and the Ukraine, from Poland and Siberia, demanding freedom and self-rule. And from the Russian fleets they came to demand that admirals be arrested and insurgent leaders freed; and from the armies at the front, to inveigh against the reforms of Kornilov. No more discipline! No more war!

And from the numberless villages, where more than a hundred million peasants toiled on wretched plots of soil with tools and ploughs all worn and broken from the long strain of the great war, they came to demand both land and tools. Let the land of the private estates be seized and given to their use. Let peace be made and their young sons sent back to the farms that needed them so. Else Russia would soon be a starving land! And then let the revolution cease; let the workingmen go back to their jobs, to make the clothing and the shoes, the tools and ploughs and horseshoes, and all the other simple things the peasants needed on their farms. Else they would no longer sell food to the cities!

Oh for a sensible revolution! One might as well ask the Great War to be nice. There were moderates in the Soviet, but though still in the majority they went about with worried eyes. For the eighty Bolsheviki here, though downed by overwhelming vote in every trial of strength they made, still with a cheerful arrogance continued their insistent cry:

"Bread for the Workers! Land for the Peasants! Peace for the World!"

For they knew that the surging masses outside were back of them in their demands. A group intense, devoted, arrogant, intolerant, ready to tear the whole world down. Nothing half way, no compromise, no careful adapting, no deliberate change. The whole business at a jump! I disliked them because, as it seemed to me, they were doing such an easy thing. It is easy to touch a match to a house. How about the women and children inside? As the great Mirabeau once said, "To tear down is the work of pigmies. It takes giants to construct." And these men did not seem to me giants; they seemed rigid, narrow, small. As my little miner friend from Nevada told me bitterly one night, when he had come back from the front.

"They want to hog this whole revolution! Not a chance for your view or mine! I am a Red, too—understand—but I belong to a different crowd of Reds from theirs. So to hell with me—I must swallow their view or get a bayonet stuck in my throat! God damn these Bolsheviki!"

So much for my first impression. My feeling was changed to some degree, and not a little clarified, by a man I met about this time. I needed a new interpreter. In that dirty old palace of din, poor Oberookoff had become so depressed, so glum and wretched, that he was almost useless now. I must hire another pair of ears. And through the inquiries I made I came upon a large tall man with thick brown hair and beard, brown eyes with a steady clear expression looking directly into mine. He spoke English with barely a trace of accent, in a deliberate manner, with frequent stops, each word articulated clearly. His voice was invariably low. He was one of the Bolsheviki. This fact he stated frankly during the first talk we had.

"All right," I said, "I should like to get the point of view of you fellows."

"That should be easy," he answered calmly. Then he looked at me. "But it will be hard."

"Why?"

"You are different," he said.

I went with him to the Soviet. Through many long tense sessions I remember his low voice in my ear, in brief phrases now and then giving me the run of the talk; but the speeches that I heard are a mere jumble to me now. They all group together in my mind behind one talk I had with him. While eating a greasy supper in a dirty restaurant, we happened to be speaking of the Russian calendar, different by thirteen days from the calendar in other lands. It must of course be changed, he was saying.

"Hello," I remarked with a little surprise. "This happens to be my birthday." My companion smiled at me.

"Yes? And it is mine," he said. "In what year were you born?" I told him. "So was I," he answered.

Then for a time we tried to picture the two spots on the face of this earth where we two men had begun our lives on that day of long ago. In reply to his questions I told him something of Seven Pines, of Aunt Amelia, Dad, my boyhood, school and college and New York.

"My experience was not the same," he said quietly at the end. "On that same day I was born in a room which was damp and hot, half under the ground, in a very poor little town near the Baltic Coast. As you know, I am a Lett. My father ran a small restaurant. It was poor and filthy. Workingmen came there to eat, and to drink tea and vodka. Often at night they would shout and fight till the smell of their sweat was bad to breathe. We lived behind in two dark rooms. The first thing in my life I remember is a journey I made one night by creeping in under the restaurant tables. I got a kick from a man who was drunk." He broke off and looked calmly back. "It was like that," he continued. "Later I went to a little school—but the teacher was a drunkard and had a disease in his stomach besides. I learned almost nothing. At fourteen I joined a circle of students and young workingmen. We talked of revolution. I borrowed books of many kinds and read them. Then my father died, and by working hard with my mother I made our restaurant pay enough so that I could go to a *gymnasium* (high school). After that I hoped in some way to get into a university.

"But in 1905 came the first revolution. It failed because we allowed the bourgeois liberals to control. 'Take the safe and sane road,' these gentlemen said. Their road led back to such a reaction as made even them indignant—but by that time they were helpless—the Old Regime was again on top. Thousands of revolutionists were executed or died in prisons. Hundreds of thousands were exiled. I was one. I was sent to Irkutsk—which was not so bad, for we have a large city there. I became a teacher in one of the schools. I already knew German. Now I learned French and English, too—and I taught these languages. They are useful to Internal tionalists. Later I escaped to Berlin, and taught Russian, French and English there until last March. Then I came back." He was silent for a moment. "Yes," he concluded, "from that day when you and I came into the world, my experience has been different."

"As different," I ventured, "as Russia and America."

"As different," he corrected me, "as being rich and being poor. As a writer you have to some extent left the bourgeois world of thought. But your life has been easy, and for that cause you cannot deeply feel the need of changes sharp and sweeping—at any risk—come what may. Like our liberals of 1905, you would have us take the safe sane road. But we know where that led us in 1905 and where it is leading us today. Kerensky and his moderate friends, both socialists and liberals, are sincere and they mean well. Why is it they do nothing but talk? Because they're afraid to make the great changes, take the leap into the dark—stop the war, give the peasants the land and the workingmen the factories, take over the whole government. My party will win," he continued, "because we are ready to take that leap."

"Into the dark," I reminded him. He looked at me calmly.

"Yes, you are right. But we are ready to assume the full responsibility. Long ago we saw clearly the fatal mistake that was being made by socialists in every land—to wait patiently till they had won a majority at the polls. We decided this was foolish—that all real progress in the past had been made by minorities, courageous enough to take the leap; and that it was also dangerous, because the bourgeois governments would force the issue to civil war before they would let it come to the polls. So we shall seize the power at the first opportunity now—and within a few years the mass of men, with fear and oppression off their backs, will come around to our point of view. Then we shall have democracy.

"If we wait till the end of the war, it will be too late," he said. "The bourgeois in the meantime will have come into control. So we must make peace at once and begin to build a new Russia here. Let Germany win the war, we say. It will make no difference. For our idea is stronger than that of the Junkers in Berlin. It will pierce into Germany and all other lands as well. And the world will then be safe for the masses who have for centuries performed all the dirty heavy labor and had only poverty in return."

So this man summed up his creed. And he was so blunt and honest that I think if he were with me now—(and often he seems indeed to be here)—he would admit that his party has been driven by events to yield the rigid principles for which they fought the moderates and "hogged the revolution." For out of all the rumors and lies about the Soviet Regime, this much at least seems to be clear. They have built up their power by compromise all along the line—forced by grim realities to give up, at least for years to come, their communistic scheme for the land and let the property-loving peasants practically own their little farms; forced to take back the old employers, managers and engineers, at enormous salaries, into the factories, mines and mills, to bring some semblance of order out of the committee mob-rule; and in the army and navy forced to restore rigid discipline, including even the *peine de mort* against which in former days they stormed as the very essence of the former tyranny. They have compromised. And among themselves a new minority group has arisen; bitter against the "bourgeois gang" surrounding Lenine in his government.

So by upheavals, jerks and turns, this queer old world moves slowly on. But who can say they were wholly wrong? Was the Bolshevist seizure of power a happening good or bad for the essential progress and happiness of all mankind? It is perhaps too soon to tell. But to me it seems, as I sit here and quietly try to think it out, that the deep angry forces which have shaken the world since then were let loose by the war itself and not by any one group of men, and that what is happening today would have happened in any case. It was bound to be so. To that extent at least this war has made of me a fatalist.

. . . .

6.

In such a mood there comes to me the memory of a little man I chanced to meet in Moscow. We spent an unforgettable night.

There with Oberookoff, for some days I had given in to the charm of that lovable friendly old town, which seemed so quiet and serene in the face of the impending storm—deep sunk in ancient memories, with its crooked hilly streets, its palaces, its theatres, its churches, churches everywhere, their shining spires, rounded domes, green or a deep vivid blue. Their bells, some harsh and jangling, but others low sepulchral booms, kept summoning all Russians still to turn their eyes up to the heavens and the everlasting God. How deep it seemed to burn, this faith. Even in the busy streets I would come upon a motionless throng gathered before some holy shrine like a cavern set among the shops, with its candles large and small gleaming softly from within. The sweet heavy odor of incense would come out of the dark little place, and a wailing burst of voices singing. And it seemed as though the whole revolution had for the moment dropped out of their lives. But on the faces of passers-by I noticed smiles of derision for this fuss and mummery. One day in a shadowy old church I found a woman kneeling before a tiny figure of the Christ-Child in a coffin there. She was whispering tensely, rapidly. Close by in the semi-darkness sat two young soldiers watching her—one of them solemn and round-eyed, the other with a puzzled frown.

And I saw this same puzzled look upon many faces one lovely summer's afternoon in a courtyard of the Kremlin, which rises out of the heart of the town, its palaces and churches encircled by old fortress walls. Here in ages long gone by the Czars of All the Russias had come to receive their power from God. I sat with Oberookoff near a dark grandiloquent giant, a great bronze statue of a Czar. Three middle-aged soldiers, dirty and ragged, came and stood staring up for a moment; then they turned without a word and wandered aimlessly away. A man and a woman came with their child, a little girl in a blue cotton dress. They sat down on the bench and looked up at the Czar, talking in low voices. The small girl kept solemnly gazing up, till a bird lit on the outstretched arm. Then she nudged her mother and pointed to it silently. A whole crowd of young soldiers came tramping along, smoking, spitting and talking in loud confident voices. They stopped and for a moment I saw again those puzzled scowls. Then a low laugh and various jokes, and much amusement over this Czar. Later two little Chinamen came and stood squinting up at that dark face. An old man and a boy in peasant clothes stopped longer here than all the rest; and as they slowly went away, several times they turned to look back as though some specter were behind.

"It is interesting," said a voice.

Not far away sat a thin little man with a pointed black beard and quizzical eyes. He spoke English very brokenly. With a smile and a shrug he gave it up and spoke in his native tongue:

"They are like children. Is it not so? 'What have we done?' they are asking. 'And what shall we do? What shall we build in place of this?' All Russia is like that," he said. "Frankly, I see nothing ahead.

Samson is shaking the pillars, and the whole temple is crashing down. As for me, I closed my office this week. My workingmen demand so much that I cannot go on. Better hide what little money is left and so keep alive as long as I can. But after all, why should I complain? For I was an architect, and when I think of what I tore down and of what I built in its place, I see that I, too, was bringing about a revolution." He smiled and said, "Perhaps it would amuse you to come and see what I have done."

He took us to his apartment, and though it was but four o'clock he asked his servant to get us some supper. The walls of his rooms were crowded with pictures, photographs of paintings, and worn bits of tapestry. He brought out some heavy folios filled with old engravings of Moscow homes in years gone by and country homes on the great estates. He was called away to his telephone, where he entered into a long conversation interspersed with jokes and chuckles.

"She is a wonderful girl!" he declared, when at last he had finished. "So bright and gay and full of life—and such a clever comedienne that already at nineteen she has made an enormous success!"

Surely the Great Revolution did not weigh heavily on his soul. After a very sketchy meal, we went out, and in the deepening dusk and on into the evening we explored the quieter streets of the town, where he showed me many lovely homes of faded pink or yellow stucco, hidden treasures of the past, many half in ruins now. He talked of the balls and banquets there and the grandeur of long ago. Many of these houses had large cobbled courts behind, surrounded by long rows of huts. In days gone by, the owners had driven in from their country estates each autumn bringing many serfs—not only household servants but carpenters and blacksmiths, shoemakers and tailors, bakers—and these courtyards with their huts had been like walled in villages.

He asked what Russian books I had read; and while we talked of Tolstoy, he took me to a garden shut off from the street by a high wall. Looking through the gateway, far back across the garden I saw a great low building of faded yellow stucco with a wing on either side and many slender columns of white. Built into one end was a little chapel.

"It was there, in 'War and Peace,' that Natasha was married to Pierre."

What a curious little man to come across in a revolution! And yet, for all his love of old homes, he had torn dozens of them down and had built in their places large six floor apartment buildings in the style of modern Berlin.

"Moscow is doomed—she must become a town of apartment buildings," he said. "This is the revolution that I have helped to bring about—and so I have no right to complain."

Other invaders had pushed in—huge garish gorgeous modern homes built by the rich manufacturers and merchants of this changing town. Slowly but surely, year by year, they had crowded the old families out. But now, before they had time to finish, they in turn were being pushed and crowded by their workingmen.

"Their serfs have risen," said my guide, "and meanwhile out in the country the children of the serfs of the past are looking at the old estates with greedy and impatient eyes. So it goes on, this Great Revolution. The beginning was in France more than a hundred years ago. It is but half finished now, it has only reached its climax. People in the future will look back on these two hundred years as one immense transition—from the world of serfs and nobles—to what? Ha—ha, my friends, to what?"

It was quite dark when we stopped in front of an immense old palace, once the home of a Grand Duke. Now a throng of soldiers and workingmen poured in and out; for it was become headquarters of the Moscow Soviet.

"This is history," said our guide. "But I am hungry. Shall we eat?"

At first it seemed that we would not, for it was close to midnight and even the small cafés were dark. But at last upon a side street we found a wretched little hole frequented by cab-drivers. Several cabs stood at the curb, and around the narrow entrance were grouped a dozen women and girls with skirts to their knees and bright colored shawls drawn over coarsely painted faces. Oberookoff did not like it, but we pulled the poor devil into the place and found seats at one of the bare dirty tables. Greasy dishes stood about. The floor was wet and filthy, and there were flies innumerable on the low ceiling and the walls. The room was crowded to the doors with drivers, workmen, soldiers, peasants, drinking tea and eating bread and villainous sodden cutlets. The prostitutes were kept outside by order of the government, but a number of big peasant women were here with baskets of vegetables at their feet. Near us sat a heavy old peasant with long curly hair nearly down to his shoulders, a filthy sheepskin over his back; and over in one corner sat a man with a withered leg and arm, a pale lean face and big feverish eyes. He was in ragged working clothes with a soldier's cap on the back of his head. At a table crowded close to ours a tall young soldier with sandy hair was smiling at two others who had just come in with bags on their shoulders.

"From the front?" he asked them.

"Yes," said a short dumpy one. "I had the rheumatics in my back—such pains as would have wrung groans from a horse. For three years in all kinds of weather

I did nothing but shoot and throw bombs—and each bomb cost as much as a sheep—and I killed nobody, brother. Now I am going back to my village to get my share of the new land." And they talked about the land for awhile. "I am glad to get out of the army," he continued presently. "Such shouts and kicks—you must walk just so—every move of leg or arm. And I got so used to that—it was hard, when the revolution came, to keep down my hand from saluting my captain—to let him understand I am free," he added with a dignified frown. "Before the revolution, my captain used to talk to me and I used to say, 'Just so.' But now he says I am a free man—and he smiles at me, the devil! And what did he do for his country? All through the war he slept every night with a beautiful Red Cross sister—while I was leading all the time the hard life of a soldier! Yet now he only smiles at me, and asks so many questions it is hard to think them out. 'You must not reply, Just so,' he says, 'for now you are a free man, my boy, and all Russia is in your hands.' And he puts many things together into my head in such a way, it is hard for me to think at all. And then he smiles, the villain! And one night when he was smiling so, he puts his pistol to his head—and crack!—he gives his soul to God!"

Such bits of talk were translated for me by the quizzical little man at my side. How much was true, I could not tell. The crowd as a whole was quiet enough, but underneath the hubbub of rough low voices all about I could feel a pent-up tensity. A spruce young sergeant with black mustache and clear kindly smiling eyes kept walking about among the tables. He was here to keep order, I learned. All at once a dispute arose close to the door. A soldier was trying to bring in one of the prostitutes from the street; and the proprietor of the place was excitedly protesting. A dozen men jumped to their feet and surrounded the trio, laughing and shouting. Then the young sergeant pushed into the group, laid his hand on the newcomer's shoulder and smiled, said a few friendly words and got the girl out There was quiet again in the restaurant. But a few minutes later the same fat painted red-faced girl came in with a jaunty young officer who, when the sergeant came up to them, gave him a haughty stare and said,

"You need not tell me of the law. I am a Russian officer. I take full responsibility."

With a troubled hesitating look the young sergeant let him by; and he took the girl to a corner table, where in a few moments they were joined by two young ensigns. Then a middle-aged workman in a black suit growled to his companions:

"Fine way to help the revolution. There was never a time when every man should obey the law as he should now!"

"It's all wrong!" said a soldier loudly. "He says he is an officer and can do anything he likes! But he can't, by God—we're as good as he is! The law is for all!" Up came the sergeant.

"Never mind, boys. Now never mind——"

"Why never mind? Why should *we* obey? Why is this law needed anyhow?"

"To stop the syphilis, brother. It is eating up the whole army here. You know how it is."

"Then why let *him* bring in a girl?"

"Wait, wait—I will soon get them out."

But a moment later in limped the tall thin workingman with the withered leg and arm. He, too, had a girl; and when he was stopped, his pale sick face went suddenly red, and he shouted furiously,

"If they can do it, why can't I?"

"Well, *tovarisch* (comrade)," said the sergeant steadily, "are you going to fight me?"

"No! I have nothing against you! Let me come in!"

"Not with the girl." The sergeant held him by the arm. "And as for those officers, brother, it will be bad for them later on," he added in a lower tone.

"Yes, it will be bad for them!" the tall cripple shouted in a high tense quivering tone. He shook his fist at the ensigns. "You are a fine dirty crowd!" he screamed. "You defended the Czar—and now the whores!"

The young officers smiled, tried to look unconcerned —but half the crowd was on its feet.

"Kill the bloody monarchists!"—"Let them obey the law like us!"—"Throw them out!"—"They wear the red badge of the revolution but they want the Czar back, the Czar!"—"Here, boys, grab them! Lend a hand!"

Out of the scuffle, din and blows, the shouts and shoves, the screams of a girl, a dense throng surged toward the door. And the three young ensigns, red with rage, were pushed and kicked out into the street—while after them a workingman and a stout peasant woman, who had the painted girl between them, sent her with a shove from the man and a resounding slap from the woman.

"Let's go out and kill them, boys!" the tall cripple yelled, brandishing his arm. But the sergeant managed to quiet him down. Soon the whole crowd had subsided, chuckling over the affair.

"Let us go," said Oberookoff. The little architect smiled at him and said in broken English,

"The past—you see?—those officers. The present—the young sergeant. The future—the man with the sick arm."

"You are wrong!" Oberookoff cried, his kindly face all quivering. "The real Russia is not in a hole like this! Even here you see how kind they are and how they obey among themselves the laws of the revolution! They are children! All they need is schools! You will see when we go to the country how the peasants love the land. And there they are shrewd—they know the soil. They are not stupid cattle but wise men! Look at their proverbs and their songs! All is going well, my friend—this revolution will not fail! All they need is a chance to earn their bread—and not starve, as they have in the past—and schools to teach their children!"

The little architect laid his hand on Oberookoff's arm and said,

"I hope it will be like that, brother."

But I could still see the smile in his eyes.

CHAPTER XVI

1.

The next day we set out for the country district in which Oberookoff had been born. We left the city early at night. It was raining, and under the wooden shed that covered the platform by our train arc lights at long intervals threw yellow glares on the crowds below. We had come early to get a place, and having piled our bags on our seats we came out again on the platform. It was of cement, worn deep in places, and it oozed with damp and mud. There was a train on either side, and the platform teemed with people. Among them gleamed the bayonets of the soldier station guards. There were Cossacks here and there, and a group of Tartars playing cards on a packing box. One of them, a huge squat soldier, joked in a hard gutteral voice. A bright-faced little woman sat on a pile of bags nearby. She was pregnant. A baby lay in her arms and two small girls lay asleep at her skirts upon the muddy pavement. A bottle of milk was by her side, and a small chunk of black bread. The bottle was empty. They had been here since five o'clock in the morning, she said, smiling up at us. There was such a rush for every train that each time they had been crowded back. Oberookoff went to the open windows of a car that was literally jammed with men, women and children, sitting and standing. No chance of getting her in through the door; but he made an appeal on her behalf, and through an open window the two little girls, the baby, the bags, and finally the small mother herself, were boosted up into the mass inside, amid much laughter and kindly advice. "Easy with her—easy boys!" What a time for a woman big with child!

The first bell had clanged, and the second; and now with three harsh whangs on the gong the train moved out with screeching wheels amid a tumult of good-byes, with its heavy load of humanity bound for distant cities, towns and little villages—to what strange stirring scenes of change?—some to go down in the chaos ahead, others to survive and live on into the new Russia. I think of the bright little woman now, and I wonder if her child were born?

A few minutes later, we took our places on our train. The people in this stifling car were a cheerful animated lot. They kept calling, laughing, gesturing to friends below the windows, and passing out money for cigarettes or small kettles to be filled from a steaming faucet nearby. Many were drinking tea inside. It was dark and hot in here, with blue clouds of tobacco smoke; but I heard the twang and tinkle of a *balalaika* and several voices singing, and there was a constant hubbub of talk from soldiers, sailors, peasants, priests, workingmen, shopkeepers. From the narrow berth just over our seat the tousled head of a soldier could be seen, and his snores were heard. A perfectly enormous man, who had been an artillery officer, was joking with two young Jewesses in our double seat below. A woman doctor, in blue silk cloak thrown over a white uniform, soon gayly entered into their talk, and now they were all going it hard—while on a valise in the aisle, a slim youngster of sixteen in a blue student uniform listened with dark eager eyes. They talked of the land and the peasants and the failure of the crops, the lack of food in the cities, the dearth of wool and cotton goods, the graft and speculation, the break-up of the armies. Dismal news at every turn—yet they seemed thoroughly to enjoy this gossip of the debacle. The stout artillery officer was so solemnly ironical and his jokes were appreciated so.

The slim young student in the aisle still smiled as he listened to the talk, but there was a worried gleam in his eyes. He was living alone on his country estate with his mother and two sisters, he said; and though he joked about the demands the peasants were making on them now, plainly he felt anxious, this only man in a lonely house, with a revolution surging on. He was restless. He kept going from group to group along the aisle, listening intently and with that same unnatural smile to what each group was saying. All up and down the dim hot car the grim gossip of disaster went cheerily on without a stop, as the train rushed through the humid night, between dripping, motionless forests.

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2.

About midnight we left our train at a desolate little station upon the outskirts of a town, and in a dilapidated cab we were driven to an inn. It was a small square building, two and a half stories high. The proprietor, a black-haired little man, led us up steep flights of stairs, his candle flaring in the draught, and ushered us into an attic room with two little old beds, a white tile stove and three rounded deep-cut windows. Although it was midnight, he cheerfully said that of course we could have supper; and in a few minutes a stout peasant girl came up the stairs in her bare feet, with a tray on which was a bowl of soup, fried steak and potatoes, cucumbers, and a generous loaf of white bread—the first I had seen for many weeks.

"You see?" cried Oberookoff, beaming. "We are in the country!"

The proprietor soon followed with a large brass samovar; and after we had eaten he drank tea and smoked with us, and settled down for a good Russian talk. Angrily jerking out his words, he complained of the high prices, graft and confusion everywhere.

"If there is not bloodshed soon, it will be a miracle!" he said. "The peasants have their fists in the air. You know how the Russian *muzhik* is. You say, 'Do this'—and he does it. But always if he sees a chance he will come on your fields at night and mow your clover, steal your tools. And now he is quite drunk with his chances. The younger peasants and soldiers have chosen deputy devils here—their 'Soviet,' they call it. But things cannot go on like this. The men of my kind in every town will unite all over Russia—and there will be a monarchy! Do you imagine that the Czar abdicated of his free will? No, they grabbed him by the nose and said, 'Sign here!' How blind he was! He should have persuaded the Allies to send in their armies, and he himself should have led them all against the Germans. This for a show. But to the Allies he should have whispered, 'My throne is shaking! Help me with troops to keep order here!'

"We are not fit to be a republic. Look at all these soldier bums! It is harvest time! Yet here they loaf, while the crops are spoiled—and we who must suffer next winter say, 'Oh, you free eaters!' How they eat! Of honest work they know nothing whatever. They shout and quarrel, these hooligans, and don't even know how to carry out the wild rules of their own revolution. Prices, taxes, orders, laws—all are mere words and figures that buzz in their stupid heads like flies—till they scratch their thick skulls and seem to be asking, 'Who are all these little birds flying around in my poor head?'

"But a strong man will come in Russia. So it has always been in the past. When Ivan the Terrible abdicated, the Boyars made a great hurrah and went on a regular spree. But the next day he said to them, 'So you thought I had gone, you devils! May fiends with their claws scratch the souls of your mothers!' He cut off their heads and put them on spikes, so that all the people could understand. And so it will be. These bums will eat and loaf and shout until at last starvation comes—and then a strong man will arise to put us in our places, by hunger and the lash, my friend!"

Throughout this angry tirade, poor Oberookoff again and again threw into his interpretations such little bits of his own as these: "He is wrong absolutely!"—"This is not true!" And when our host had left, he said, "Wait till we get to the country."

"I thought we were already there," I remarked maliciously.

"This the country?" he said with contempt. "No, this is nothing but a town! Tomorrow we shall drive twenty versts out into the real Russia!"

For a little while I lay in the dark listening to the occasional voices and the tramp of feet below, bursts of laughter, distant cries, and men's voices singing. Then I heard a hard clear rattle. It stopped, but was repeated —and each time louder, nearer. I asked my companion what it was, and he answered sleepily, "The watchman going about on his rounds." Presently it died away, that thin little sound which stood for the law and order of generations now gone by. . . . All Russia waiting, drifting, swept along on an ocean tide. . . . I fell asleep.

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3.

The next day was bright and sunny, and we set out to find two men to whom I had letters of introduction. One of them was a liberal prince who had been the head of the Zemstvo (district legislature) here; the other was a young Bolshevik who belonged to the local Soviet. It was a large and straggling town, with cobbled streets and dwellings of brick or stout brown logs, with deep little windows—the frames of white or red or blue. Everywhere tramped soldier lads with dull good-natured faces, dirty clothes. At one point on the narrow main street, hundreds of them were standing about or sitting on the curbs in rows, or crowding up to the open windows of a big log school house listening to the voices that came from a room inside. Here was the local Soviet. I caught but a glimpse of them at a table. One was pounding it with his fist.

"We must have a look at this," I said.

Over the kindly features of my interpreter, guide and friend, there spread a patient abused expression. As a lamb to the slaughter he led the way to the room inside, where a dozen young soldiers and peasants sat with maps and ledgers in which they were entering all the private estates of the locality, with the amount of woodland, swamps and cultivated soil in each; and they were making lists of the peasants among whom all was to be divided. Some were arguing angrily, their hot hair soaked and matted with sweat. A sallow-featured shrewd young man sat listening, smoking a cigarette. He turned out to be my Bolshevik. Reading my letter quickly, he led the way to a quieter room; and into my little opening speech he broke with an impatient smile.

"I don't care who you are," he said. "We have nothing to hide. Ask your questions." He was a Moscow workingman who had been born in a village nearby. "I know these peasants like myself." He was one of thousands sent from the cities to organize the little towns. "And the joke of it is, we are strong enough to make our old employers pay us wages while we are here. We are forcing the bourgeois of the towns to pay to destroy the bourgeois of the country districts," he said. It was high time. For the landowners were using the priests and the richer peasants to strengthen their party, the Kadets, and so hold back the revolution.

He was here to head that off. Already they had turned the landowners out of the local Zemstvo and filled it with men whom they could trust. And now the real power was right in this room.

"There are two big jobs to put through," he said. "Get peace and give the land to the people. Both are easy, the peasants want both. They are shouting for peace in every village; and they want land—and they want it all. And that is just what the landowners won't give them. For fifty years in the Zemstvos these gentlemen have spouted Humanity and Progress here—reforms, reforms! But the one reform that is needed most is that they should give up their land to the peasant—'get off his back', as Tolstoy said. In many ways he was an old fool, but there at least he spoke the truth. What right have they to their estates? Did they ever sweat to till the soil? So now we are going to take their land and make it national property, and lease it to the peasants—the rent to be counted into their taxes."

While Oberookoff, glum and troubled, translated what had been said to me, the young workingman listened with a grim smile.

"How long are you here?" he asked; and when I replied that I wanted a look at the big estate of Prince Ivan Petrovitch, his smile broadened and he said, "By all means go to his estate. Let him tell you all the reforms he has made—and then look at his peasants in their huts, and see what good it has done them." He added, "And remember besides that this old Prince is at least an honest liberal. There are others in this district who are working day and night to put us back under the Czar. That is why we keep troops here in the town."

Abruptly he rose and went back to his work. And Oberookoff, quivering with righteous indignation, followed me out to the street.

"Here in the town he thinks himself strong—but wait till we get to the villages! Twenty versts from here you will find that they never even heard of this fellow! Then you will see——"

"The real Russia," I said. "All right, Oberookoff, lead the way!"

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4.

Ivan Petrovitch was standing in front of the small courthouse, looking absent-mindedly at the soldiers down the street. A tall massive stoop-shouldered elderly man with a heavy beard and spectacles, in an old linen duster and slouch hat, with a black portfolio under his arm, he looked to me more like an old fashioned professor than a prince. At sight of Oberookoff, his kind heavy features lighted up in a friendly way. He grasped my hand and in broken English urged me to come and make him a visit; and early in the afternoon he came for us in an open carriage, a low creaking little vehicle, the cushion leather worn away and the old harness patched with rope. The two rotund little ponies were owned by the peasant driver. The Prince had sent his own horses long ago out to the front, where one of his sons had already been killed and two others had not been heard from in months. As we clattered through the cobbled streets we passed three schools and a hospital, built largely through his efforts. But now his work was at an end. The crowds of young peasant soldiers idly smoking cigarettes glanced at him as though to say.

"Who the devil is this old gent?"

We had a long drive that afternoon. The little dirt road climbed low wooded hills and wound down through the meadows along the edge of a small quiet river. From time to time Ivan Petrovitch pointed to some lovely bit of meadow, hill or river bend. He seemed to love this country well, as one who had taken thousands of such drives by day or night. For over twenty years, he said, he had stayed here through the winters. His Zemstvo work had kept him here, but he did not talk of it now. It was over. Every now and then we passed a peasant village, two lines of straggling wretched huts. I remembered the words of the young Bolshevik:

"Look for yourself and see what good all his reforms have done them."

Very little, it appeared. Of the peasants we passed, a very few doffed their caps and smiled a greeting; most of them looked with sullen eyes. And as in Petrograd, so here, I felt the heavy heritage the Past had left to these critical days. There had been so much oppression. By a small creek, he pointed out a great pyramid of boulders some forty or fifty feet in height. This had been an ice house.

"You see," he said, "in the days of serfs Count B——, who owned this large estate, made them build such nonsense just to suit his idle whim."

And now he and his kind were to pay for such whims. Reforms, reforms—they were not enough. It was land the peasants wanted. Yet there seemed to be such an abundance of land. We went through dark glorious forests of pine and came out onto great landscapes of wide rolling meadows; and again I had the feeling, that had come to me so often before, of the vastness of this country—its boundless resources barely scratched. An enormous clumsy barge, pulled by nearly a score of mules, came slowly up the river; and this gave Oberookoff his cue for a talk about the rivers of Russia, large and small, innumerable.

"They are our friends, these rivers. More than the roads they carry our freight. We don't need so many ugly railroads as in America. We are not in such a hurry here. And look how beautiful it is!" He pointed down to the river. "All day your barge goes slowly on, and you have time that is good for your soul. And such power, too, as we have in these rivers for electric force some day! In the Ural Mountains and down in the Caucasus the power of the waters is a mighty thing to see! And the real Russian people, too, are like that. You have heard too many ugly lies. There is a deep power in their souls! I tell you and tell you they only need schools!"

The sun was setting over the hills. It shone clear and bright into a miserable group of huts through which we passed, and it made a group of peasants scowl as they watched our little old carriage go by. We plunged into a forest then, where in the slowly deepening dusk the tall pines and lovely birches loomed like phantoms. Not a sound. A rabbit scampered from the road and disappeared in the shadows. We emerged on a wide field, and upon the opposite side we came through a little park to the home of Ivan Petrovitch.

It was a large white house of wood, with a square middle section two stories high, slender white columns at the front and a low wing on either side. It was a beautiful old place. Back of the house was an oval garden, on either hand were tall graceful silver birches, and behind from a low wooded bluff you looked down across the river to a rolling meadow. We walked along the edge of the bluff under the pines and Siberian larches. It was cool and silent here, peaceful with a mellow beauty, glimpses down across the stream. Deep and smooth, with barely a murmur, it swept out of view in a lovely bend. I saw the swirl of a fish down there; and later I spied the boys of the family, each with a long fish-pole, standing on a sandy point. We met no peasants on our walk, but the benches all along the path had been thrown into the water below.

"The peasants do that. By day they are friendly, but at night they come and throw these benches down. When we put them back, they do it again," said Ivan Petrovitch, with a smile.

We retraced our steps and had a look through the gardens and the stables and barns. Of the seventy peasants who had formerly worked the estate, only eight were left, and only a dozen cattle remained. We came on an old nurse out there with a wee grandson of the Prince, who was squealing with delight over a litter of black and white puppies and a small Swiss calf in the yard, of whom the pups were in terror and kept scampering for their lives. Neither the war nor the revolution bothered this sturdy little boy or these fascinated frantic pups. They had the present on their hands!

What kind of a future would it be? There must be deep anxiety here; but still they did not show it, this friendly happy family. That evening at supper there was no meat, but dishes heaped with vegetables, huge mushrooms, a potato salad, plenty of fresh butter and cheese, black bread and jam. The big brass samovar hummed and glowed, and we lingered long over our tea, smoking many cigarettes.

The mother of Ivan Petrovitch was a small woman with snow-white hair, a fine wrinkled face and bright indomitable eyes that reminded me of Aunt Amelia. His wife looked younger than himself, a tall dark slender woman with a friendly and appealing smile. And there were three grown daughters, a son-in-law, a large stout uncle, and three boys—the youngest a little lad of ten dressed in a rough patched blouse and pants, feet bare, head tousled, hunger enormous. These people all wore simple old clothes. Two of the daughters served the meal, for of a dozen house servants nobody but the cook remained. The daughters washed the dishes, swept the rooms and helped with the mending. No more clothes to be had in the town, so these old ones must be made to last. Till when? Till what? No one spoke of that. They took it all as a great lark. Within a brief hour these friendly people made me feel as though I had known them a long time. It all seemed so familiar here, this home so like to Seven Pines. Different? Yes, in a hundred ways. But these were *my kind* of people. They were liberals, and deep down in my heart I damned the hide-bound despots whose sins had been visited on this home.

Now they talked about the war. They were eager to hear all I could tell of American preparations. As for Russia? There was silence then—a low growl from the stout uncle—and a little laugh at that. This uncle was the family wit. He was the one Tory here, and his ironic comments brought forth laughter from the rest. The new *commissaire* of police in the town was a common convict, he declared, who had served ten years for burglary. Now this chap was chief of police, and this was entirely proper and right. For socialism was robbery, and therefore socialist police—he stopped with an expressive shrug. The others had more liberal views. They maintained that the only hope for Russia lay in a coalition between the more moderate socialists and progressives like themselves. But meanwhile in the town nearby the Bolsheviki had arrived, and their proclamations were eagerly read, while those distributed by the Prince were scowled upon and thrown away.

"How amazing!" said the fat uncle. "One might have thought that these wise peasants would have preferred the truth to the lies!"

He spoke of estates in the district that had already been attacked. Two or three had been burnt down. Here the three men of the family and the tall slim lad of sixteen all slept with rifles by their beds.

For the two little boys it was bedtime now. They came around the table and raised their mother's hand to their lips, while she pressed their faces for a moment against her own. Then they went to their grandmother and to their three sisters. Their older brother later on went through the same simple gallantry. Still the talk continued. At last affectionate goodnights, and lighted candles disappearing down the hall and up the stairs. In my room I found an old copy in French of *Les Trois Mousquetaires.* And I read it awhile, till the deep quiet drowsy voice of the forest made me toss it aside.

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5.

The next day we breakfasted on the porch, and there was much joking over the latest bit of news of the revolution. The chicken house had been raided! Only five old hens were left. "What shall we be eating a month from now?" They faced it in a genial way—all except the stout uncle. Plainly he had loved his meals, and he scowled as he sipped a bitter concoction made of rye and chicory. "The chicory, too, will soon be gone!" He detested tea, which the others were drinking. Black bread, butter, cheese, and honey—the simple meal was soon at an end; and presently Oberookoff and I were left with Ivan Petrovitch, who in his soft heavy voice talked to me for an hour or two about "the great slow revolution" which in Russia had already been going on for fifty years, under the lead of the Zemstvos. Schools, hospitals, doctors, midwives, veterinary surgeons and agricultural teachers—these had been gradually introduced through the slow patient efforts of liberal noblemen like himself. But the war and the revolution had broken the whole system down.

"Now the peasants are crying for land," he said. "What good will it do them? They do not even cultivate the land which they already possess. Much of it is quite unused, and the rest is tilled by little ploughs which cut but three inches into the soil. What they need is not land but modern ploughs, model farms and agricultural schools. And all this means intelligence. What hope in these Bolsheviki for that?"

He took me over the estate. The huge barns, the stables, the dairy, the grist mill and the threshing barn were built of logs; and there were huts for the laborers straggling off along the dark uneven edge of the forest. And I had an impression here of a leisurely helter-skelter growth, like that of a southern plantation at home, all very easy-going, based on the labor first of serfs and later of peasants to whom were paid such low wages that there had been little need of careful planning—till now all at once that labor was gone.

We came out on a great clover field, warm with patches of red and blue flowers; the air was sweet and fragrant, and bees were humming on every hand. It had been mowed three weeks ago, but the clover was already nearly up to our knees again.

"This soil was no richer than that of the peasant land nearby," said our host. "But it has been plowed deep for many years, with a five year rotation of crops—while the peasants with their poor little ploughs turn a furrow but three inches deep, and plant oats, rye, potatoes or flax until the soil is exhausted. And that is not the only trouble. Look how their land is divided."

A strange looking landscape met my eyes. A wide rolling field about a mile square was all cut up in long thin strips of rye, oats, timothy, flax or potatoes—striped like a zebra, gray, yellow and brown. Some strips were only ten feet wide. The peasants of the village, a cluster of huts not far away, owned this land in common and divided it up among themselves for a period of some twenty years. Then the village Mir (town meeting) after days of excited discussion made a re-division according to the changing size of the families. To each family was given several small plots of land or strips like these, often a mile or two apart.

"You see what a waste this means," he said. "Between each strip is a border of a foot or two in width. These borders alone waste a tenth of the land. And besides, what good does it do a peasant to toil day and night on his narrow strip, if his lazy neighbor lets the weeds and thistles grow? Here are strips that have been neglected for years—their owners have died or moved away, but they cannot sell, and it is not time for the re-division by the Mir. There is waste in the plowing, waste in the reaping, wasted labor all the year round. And now, if they do seize my estate, they will soon with a terrific amount of shouted discussion divide it into strips like these, and back it will go to a primitive state. With their wretched ploughs and ancient methods, the crops of Russia will go down to an extent that will mean famine to large sections of Europe. And it is by no means improbable," he said very quietly, "that this is going to happen soon—though at present they are friendly."

So they seemed as we talked to them in the village over across the field. All greeted us pleasantly enough, and they were as pleased and excited as children when I used my kodak there. An old peasant showed me his stable and barn, while his daughter dressed in frantic haste in her Sunday clothes for a picture, and then at the last moment ran away blushing and waving her hands. After that a friendly old granny took me into her hut nearby. It was fairly clean but stifling hot, and it stank from the stable and pigsty built right onto the side of the hut. In the kitchen was a huge stove and oven of white plaster; and above it was a bed of planks on which she slept in winter. In the hot front room was a baby in a swinging cradle tightly covered with a cloth to keep out the swarms of flies. In one corner hung an icon with a tiny lamp burning beneath it. Broad heavy planks were upon the floor and bits of rag carpet here and there, and an old carved chair that I much admired. The old woman beamed upon me then; and the group of six or eight women and girls and two or three men, who had gathered outside, all talked and joked and laughed with their Prince as amicably as though there were no Great Revolution, no chicken house raided the night before, no benches thrown down into the river.

"Look at their faces—how friendly they are," said Ivan Petrovich, smiling. "Yet every night they drive their cattle onto my fields. In the revolution of 1905 they came from several villages in a great noisy crowd one night and set fire to one of my barns. I came out and tried to stop them, but not one would come to my aid. In a perfectly friendly fashion they said to me, 'No, Ivan Petrovitch, this is now the revolution and we must burn your barns and your home.' One old peasant sighed very deeply and said, 'It is the will of God.' They began to pull furniture from my house in order to throw it into the flames. My sons and I ran for our guns, and so we managed to save the house. . . . Soon they may try the same thing again. . . . They are children."

Still they smiled at him.

"They won't work for me. They won't even sell me the eggs of the hens they have stolen."

Humbly one of the men then asked if he might borrow the Prince's cart to haul some lumber to the mill.

"Of course," said the Prince; and turning to me, "God knows if I shall get it back."

All looked curiously at me.

"Ivan Petrovitch," said an old woman, "why did you bring an enemy here?"

"He is not an enemy. I told you he is an American, and his country is now in the war."

"But are they not on the German side?" one of the men asked quietly. To the Prince's explanation they listened with deep interest.

"The Americans," he ended, "are going to send over three million soldiers soon to France."

"They are going to," said a peasant sagely. "Then they are not yet our Allies. For who knows when they will get their men over?" He sighed. " 'While the sun is getting ready to rise, the dew will eat away our eyes'." And when the Prince went on to tell how hard the Allies were fighting in France, while Russians were disgracing their country, "Well, let them fight," sighed the peasant. "We are tired out with this war." Instantly there came murmurs of agreement from the women. One of them said, "Now for so many years we have had to do all the work on our fields. So the crops are bad and we shall starve if our men do not come back to us."

"But they are back! They have left the front already by millions! Yet they sit idle in the town! And soon their Soviet," said the Prince, "will come and take away your grain!"

At this they all looked at him with shrewd cunning in their faces.

"Oh my darling," said the old granny softly, "I have so little grain left in my barn—and so many little brats of grandchildren have been left with me—and no help from anyone. I must watch and hide it all way. God's will be done." And she crossed herself.

He spoke to them again of the war. Soon the Germans would march into Russia, seize control of the government and then lay a heavy tax on every peasant in the land. "Where you have paid fifty roubles, you will pay hundreds," he declared. The peasants looked at him cunningly.

"Yes?" said one of them sadly. "Oh, how hard for us that would be."

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6.

Presently we left them and started for Oberookoff's home in a village three miles down the river. On the way we stopped at a grist mill to see the notorious sorcerer there. The mill stood on a high river bank, with a yawning gravel pit close by—in which at night, the people said, he communed with the powers of darkness. A shaggy old man, stout as a bull, with deep-set little shrewd blue eyes—to me he looked far from a mystic. Proudly he showed me into his mill; and as in that dark dusty place I listened to the swish and whine of the big stone as it ground the rye, I could feel his eyes eagerly fixed on mine. He could barely wait to show me the new turbine he had bought to replace the clumsy old water wheel.

"See how smoothly it goes," he said fondly. "As though all the blessings of God were upon it."

A practical old sorcerer! For over ten years, in spite of the law forbidding his use of the water here, he had kept open his little canal—partly through bribes to the local police, still more because no peasants could be induced to take the job of closing up his small canal and so incurring his wizard wrath.

"He has real hypnotic power," said Ivan Petrovitch, "and he employs it just enough, upon the peasants when they are sick, to keep them all in awe of him. I have seen him stop a flow of blood simply by hypnotic force. But his only real passion is for his mill—to him the whole war and the revolution are nothing at all compared to this. And the future may show that he is right. For in the months that are coming, he who can keep *that* going, will be the real wizard in our land," said the Prince, with his large kind spectacled eyes fixed on the little torrent of meal that kept gushing out of the mill.

We walked on down the river, and at a spot where the high banks were muddy and trampled by cattle we came to the village in which Oberookoff lived—a row of log dwellings, with stables and barns clustering behind them. There were two white stucco buildings—one, the church, with its cupola dome of green and gold; the other, Oberookoff's school. The rows of desks were empty, for this was vacation time. Here, since he was wounded in 1915, with his mother and his sister he had taught the boys and girls of this and three other villages—but of what he said about his work I have no recollection. So much more strong and vivid is my memory of his mother's face as she talked to me in their home nearby—a large cabin of two stories, the upper floor of white plaster, the lower one of smooth brown logs. The small living-room, clean but disorderly, had a personal and homelike air, with the invariable big white stove, an icon in one corner, a few pictures on the wall—including one of Seven Pines—geranium plants in the deepcut windows, a tall cabinet filled with dishes and cups, a lamp on a low table and some book-shelves by the wall. It had been her home for twenty years.

Born on a small estate nearby, which under the careless management of her father had dwindled away until even the house was gone, she had married a schoolteacher and in various villages they had made the hard fight of the first pioneers in the work of educating the peasants. Her husband had been exiled and had died in Siberia. She had carried on their work alone, until twenty years ago with her daughter she had come back to her birthplace here. All this I had heard many times from her son, who idolized his mother. I had been eager to meet her—nor was I disappointed now. A brown wrinkled woman in gray cotton dress, at seventy odd she still looked strong, and she showed in her large black eyes a force that held me spellbound as she talked. Her daughter was away at present, working in a neighboring town. With her three little grandchildren she welcomed us into the room; and at first she had very little to say; but when the Prince had left us to see to some work on his estate, in response to questions from her son she began to tell of her teacher's life. And into the rosy picture Oberookoff had given me of Russian education she broke with the realities of a teaching life of fifty years.

"Most of our country teachers were not fit to teach at all. It was as though the Government felt that any teacher was good enough for mere peasants' children," she said, with a quiet bitterness. "A teacher for a village school should have such a wide practical training that he can answer all the questions as to their daily work and life which the peasants here keep asking. He should show such a knowledge of farming that the peasants soon would say, 'Here is no mere man of books but the wisest peasant of us all.' But in Russia it has not been so. There have been splendid exceptions, of course—and in all our land there have been no more devoted idealists than our country teachers. But their position, bad at the start, became almost unendurable. They soon won the peasants' contempt. These ineffectual men and women, who knew nothing of practical work and could only teach children out of books, were met by scowls and grins of derision.

" 'What's the good of this?' the peasants asked. 'And we must pay for it out of our taxes!'

"They did all they could to keep salaries down. The teacher was lodged in some peasant's hut, a filthy place to live in. For days she would get almost nothing to eat. What was the good, they argued, of keeping such a fool alive? They did not like her to laugh or joke. When she did, some peasant would often growl, 'It is not her business to be so gay! Let her *earn* this salary we pay!' And many older peasants said, 'See what comes of taking our children away from the priest. In his school, though he taught nothing useful, at least he made them fear God and the Saints, and he saved their souls—while now, with this new weak schooling, off go the boys and girls to the towns, and the Devil creeps deep into them there!'

"So these teachers struggled on. Many of us took pupil boarders, children from other villages too small to walk in the winter storms. They went home on Sundays for a supply of bread and uncooked vegetables; and these they brought back to the teacher, who often had to cook for them and wash their filthy clothes as well. All together they crowded into a peasant's hut, on top of the family, chickens and pigs. Often in a winter's storm or when a pack of wolves was about, she would have older children, too—a dozen or more—upon her hands. All this was hard—it was very hard. Yet in my own case I was amply rewarded by seeing the real development these little boarder pupils made when I had them day and night. I taught the girls to cook and sew, and I taught the boys as much as I could of farming and the care of live-stock and a little carpentry.

"These are the things they need to know. For there is a tremendous power here and a deep beauty in this life. These peasants seem to be stubborn and hard and very dark with ignorance; yet out of them come wise shrewd proverbs, fables and miraculous legends that show what a treasure-house of wisdom and imagination is within their shaggy heads. And out of a filthy little hut comes a piece of lace or embroidery that shows what the peasant woman could do, if her life from dawn to darkness were not weighed down by dirt and toil. It is not book learning they need. We must build on real foundations, go straight to their real interests and teach them what they need to know to escape from all this filth and toil.

"Ivan Petrovitch," she went on, "is a kind and very liberal man. But like many others in charge of the Zemstvos, he was not very practical. Those liberal landowners lacked force. Most of them have managed their own estates so badly that half their fields and forests have been sold to pay their debts. And now the peasants will seize the rest, and there will be great confusion here," said the stern old woman quietly, "till at last some way is found out of it all. In the meantime my daughter and I will have her three little children to keep alive. My son had better be with us this autumn. Perhaps they will let us open the school. And, if we can manage it, I shall take back the nine little boarders we had last year. For life will be hard for them in their huts.

"Now all is moving quickly back to the older days," she ended. "For years there has been no spinning here—they went to buy their clothes in the town. But every old granny is now getting ready her spinning wheel in every hut. They will make their own clothes and shoes this year, and hide their wool and their rye in the ground. The village will draw into its shell till the cities come to their senses."

She left us to see to some work in the house.

"You see what a woman she is," said Oberookoff proudly. And looking at him I realized whence had come his passion for schools.

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7.

I lunched with them, and after that we visited several huts in the village. Then, as with my companion I sat on the high river bank, a voice hailed us from below. It was the brother of Ivan Petrovitch, the stout uncle of the night before. He had come for me in a skiff, to propose that we go fishing. It was a soft fragrant afternoon. As I sat at the oars and let our boat drift slowly down the river, my stout companion casting now and then from side to side, I watched the life along the banks. On the edge of a dark forest of pines, a gnarled shaggy old man and a red-headed boy were cutting wood.

We drifted slowly around a bend and came on a steep little meadow. A woman was plowing with one little horse, urging him on up the slope with a shrill, monotonous cry, her bare feet sinking deep in the furrows—while a little girl nearby was throwing clods of earth into the stream to see them splash. On and on we drifted. We met fishers in old boats or ashore. What numberless men and women had passed along this river, I thought, by day and night, by skiff and barge and by rough sledges on the ice. For generations this small stream had been a highway of human life, with its labor, dreams and prayers, its priests and wandering "holy men," its tramps and its philosophers, its bargemen and its peddlers, its doctors and its sorcerers, all bent on various errands. What real change would there be in it all? The Great Revolution dwindled here before the vast mysterious force of the working, living, dreaming, of over a hundred million people of the villages— this life that flowed on smooth and deep, like the dark whispering water.

A loud grunt from the fat uncle. His long rod was bent double now, and his line cut the water with a swish. Rapidly I rowed the boat into the middle of the stream, away from dangerous weeds and snags. He grunted his approval; and after playing his fish for a time, at last he heaved him into the boat—a big glistening yellow pike. And then my stout companion, this Prince of Old Russia, this gloomy man who scowled on the revolution, mopped his red perspiring brow with a look of placid pride, and by another grunt and gesture indicated a small sand beach. We landed there. He began to undress. Promptly and gladly I did the same; and soon in the cool soft water we were swimming about with deep content. How far away from Petrograd! Little fish nibbled at my toes.

But this peaceful mood of mine was soon to be profoundly changed. For we finished our swim and started home; and now, as the slow minutes dragged, all my friendly feeling for my huge fellow fisherman changed to one of keen dislike and deepening indignation. For there he sat, an enormous lump sinking the stern deep into the water—while I, grown doubly lank and lean from the wretched meals in Petrograd, rowed him slowly up the stream. What a current! What a load! Every stroke was a back-breaking heave! And an hour passed and the dusk set in, and my back was one long ache and throb—and I cursed him, the damned parasite! Why couldn't he take his turn at the oars? "So this is how the peasant feels!" I was a Bolshevik that night; and as I heaved and bent and swore, I grew steadily Bolshevikier!

But supper that evening at nine o'clock dispelled my aches and angry gloom. And later, in a restful room with a piano at one end and two tall candles burning there, one of the grown daughters who had a rich sympathetic contralto voice sang many old songs of Russia; while at the piano, eyes shining in the candle-light, her grandmother played the accompaniments. And these old songs—from the forests and fields and from the Mother Volga—she seemed to know them all so well. The others in the family sat listening as peacefully as though there were no rifles stacked behind the entrance door, no excited multitudes in stifling halls in Petrograd, no rebellious mob of soldiers in the district town nearby, no groups of stolid peasants talking in low voices outside the door of some log hut in the village less than a mile away.

I recalled what the young Bolshevik had said to me the day before. How much good had Ivan Petrovitch done the peasants by his reforms? And few landowners in the past had been as liberal as he. There had been serfdom, heavy toil, the overseer, the jail, the knout. And so now, for a time at least, there was to be little place or chance for kindly liberal people like these. Their faces are dim in my memory—dim as in the candle glow. For as I sit here in this room and look back, the faces of workmen and peasants keep rising up before my eyes—hard, strong and clear in the glare of the day.

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8.

I remember the night in Petrograd when Oberookoff came to the train to bid me good-by. With a good deal of trouble I had secured a berth on the Trans-Siberian. On the wet dirty platform was a dense throng of people, part of the panicky multitude leaving the city by every train; for this was only a little before the Bolsheviki seized control. As our express moved slowly out, I caught a last glimpse of my friend. With a forlorn affectionate smile he waved his hand, then turned away and was lost in the confusion.

"The village will draw into its shell till the cities come to their senses."

I have not heard from him since that night; but often I can feel him here, watching anxiously my work to see that I don't forget the schools.

The long journey eastward is dim and unreal as a dream to me now. At first fearfully tired, I slept in long stretches or sat for hours at the window, my mind a blank, staring out on the autumn landscape. All the confusion and the din and the fever of change was left behind. Deep silent forests, rolling meadows, autumn colors, autumn leaves upon the ground and the sweet smell of burning wood. Stout log huts and stolid faces. Men and women plowing, chopping, driving carts or trudging slowly with loads on their shoulders—stopping to stare at us as we passed. Most of the people of Russia, and all the peasants of Europe, I thought, were folk like these, with lives hard, quiet, deep and slow. Such people might riot and burn and kill, but for only a little moment in time. Then again the deep sure pull of daily habits centuries old would draw them back, and their hard quiet lives would go on very much as before.

For changes that look tremendous in printed proclamations and laws grow small in these vast tides of life. Their significance melts away, as their effects for weal or woe are fused in the prodigious whole. The ills they cure are soon forgotten, and the improvements they effect are taken as a matter of course. Small transformations here and there, new gleams and glimmers of vision, new pleasures and worries, quarrels and schemes. But the day from sunrise until dark would see little difference here, I thought. For all this would be slow—only a part of the Great Slow Revolution which, as the little architect said, had already taken a hundred years and would doubtless fill a century more. The present upheaval would be brief. Then back to some order, both old and new, which would meet the desires at least in a measure of the stolid millions like these. God grant the world would have moved on a peg when that season of quiet came again.

CHAPTER XVII

1.

I REACHED home in the fall of 1917. The following June I left for France. Of the months intervening, my memories are uneven—a few of them clear and distinct, the others already dim and unreal. This is partly due, I am told, to what happened to me later on; but it is due still more, I think, to the fact that I had seen so much of war and revolution that my mind was packed and jammed and could take in little more. I felt the whole prodigious struggle speeding to a climax now, with bloody death and pestilence and famine spreading far and wide, and deep passions of revolt—the whole world groaning with it all.

But over here it was not so. For my trip across this continent gave me glimpses of a nation fresh and only beginning to feel the seemingly boundless powers that came with the "get together" idea. From a Russia gone half mad with its new dreams and liberties, I came home to a swiftly tightening order of things in my native land. Like the German discipline? No—a hundred per cent. American—uneven and emotional, rising out of the people themselves. But it was intense, intolerant toward any obstructing minority. The men on the train all talked like that. This was no time for an easy hand; the liberty of the world was at stake; and pacifists and strikers and little skunks of every kind who dared to knock the government were pro-Germans and should be in jail. "Win the War!" I heard that magic slogan in every crowded smoking car, and talk of war jobs by the score. These jobs were of a hundred kinds, but all converged on the one resolve, "Get together and do it quick!"

At the stations more than once I saw troop trains thunder in, with voices singing, cheering, boohing; and women and girls in Red Cross garb or the uniform of the Canteen served coffee and sandwiches, cigarettes, with smiles and quick excited talk that made me think of the night long ago when I had entered Germany upon a starlit Christmas Eve. And yet it was so different here. At one station we were held to clear the track for a long train, which came in with a load of lads just drafted, on their way to camp. They were inclined to swagger, these youths. Most of them came from a rival town, and one of them asked with withering scorn,

"Say—ain't there one real man in this town who ain't afraid of the Kaiser's guns?"

At that there was a terrible row. But suddenly a piercing voice rang out above the tumult. High up on a baggage truck stood an old man with a crutch.

"Heigh there, damn ye, listen to me!" When silence came, he rolled his quid, spat on a trunk and then drawled, "Say. If you brave fellers want to know why our boys ain't here to join ye, I'm the man to tell ye. They ain't here because every ding blasted fighting mother's son of 'em is gone already. Understand? They didn't wait to be drafted—no more'n I did in the Civil War. Now shet up an' go on back into your train—or I may mob ye!"

I remember a glimpse we had of the principal street in a little town. A hundred flags were waving there and a home band was crashing away as though the whole war depended upon it. It stopped, and a speaker's voice was heard:

"Your country needs your money, friends—it needs your money and your lives!"

A roar of cheers from the farmer crowd—and I thought of my Aunt Amelia. Her beloved West had roused at last. We passed a lonely farmhouse out on a rolling prairie. It was nearly midnight, but lights still shone from its windows; and upon a field nearby, a huge tractor with its searchlight throwing a bright path ahead was dragging a gang of ploughs along. It reminded me of my cousin Ed. My train was to pass not far from his ranch, so I sent him a wire; and sure enough, the next afternoon at a prairie station he got on the train. What a change from the man of a year before. He looked tense and overworked. Half the men were gone from his ranch, he said, and his son was on a destroyer. A drive for the Loan had just begun, and it was a devil of a rush to bring up the County's quota to double what had been asked for. "Practically every farmer is buying more bonds than he ought to—and if he don't, we see that he does!" One "pro-German slacker" had been ridden on a rail, another thrown into the creek—and the rest had learned their lesson. "No bolshevik has a chance out here!" For my accounts of Russia he had nothing but impatient disgust. When I tried to give him some idea of what our friendship for the Slavs could mean if it were given in time to head off a Russian-German entente, he interrupted bluntly.

"That may be well enough for the millennium," he said. "But we've got one job—to lick the Huns! And Russia's a quitter! So leave her alone!" He jerked out his watch. "I've got to jump off right here and now—I'm to speak at a meeting tonight back home! Good luck, Larry, glad you're back! But as for helping those Rooskies now, I wouldn't give 'em the smell of my hogs!"

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2.

Coming from such talks as this, such glimpses of our strong new land as I was whirled across it eastward, when at last I reached New York it struck me like a foreign town. As our train came into the city, it seemed as though every window had a foreigner leaning out; the streets were filled with crowds of them; and in the Grand Central the whole gigantic hubbub had a foreign accent to my ears. A queer home town for a man in this war! I dropped my luggage at Dad's home; and finding none of the family in, I went on down to Newspaper Row.

"Go by Fifth Avenue," I said.

"Slow going, boss," said the taxi man.

"Never mind, I want a look at the street."

It was worth seeing. With the Drive well under way, big vivid banners and the flags of the Allies hung overhead; there were brightly colored booths below, and men and women and even small boys were orating on every street corner to crowds. There were uproarious bursts of cheers, the crash of bands, the honk of horns. But under all this surface flood of color and sound I kept noticing the endless tides of foreign faces pressing by. When we stopped in the jam I could hear their voices, harsh, guttural, shrill, as the case might be. Faces florid, stolid, pasty, swarthy faces, gleaming eyes and quick excited gestures. Down into Washington Square we came, into crowds of Italian women and children. We turned into the Ghetto—a hubbub of guttural Yiddish there. What a vulgar hodge podge of a town! But the great buildings towering ahead made me suddenly feel like a little snob.

"Who the devil are you," they seemed to ask, "Mr. Hundred Per Cent American? Who built this town? We are made of steel which was mined and milled by Pollacks and Hungarians, and was put into place by Irish steel workers under contractors who are for the most part Jews."

"I know, I know," I answered, "the Jews own the city and the Irish own the votes. The Jews make our clothes and the Chinamen wash 'em. The Germans run our music and——"

"Here, you, quit your kicking. Is there any other city on earth that can touch me?"

"No," I answered humbly. And soon I was under the spell of my town.

I reached my father's house that day in time for tea with Aunt Fanny. A big flag rippled softly above the front door, and I noticed a service flag in one of the front windows. Young Carrington had gone to France. There was no foreign accent here—nothing swarthy, dirty, coarse. Low voices, softly lighted rooms, luxury and restful ease, a fire burning cosily. While Aunt Fanny poured the tea, I settled back in a soft chair and asked myself, "What's the matter now? Can't you *ever* feel at home?" But within me a small guttural voice such as I had heard on the streets, insisted, "Say. A hell of a fine home this is for American democracy. Look at the pin she's wearing." This was a lovely enamel affair. It was worn, she explained, by all those women who belonged to the Mayor's Committee for the National Defense. In this defense she was helping by working with others like herself to "Americanize" the foreigners. Each day she went to a busy office from which a stream of orators poured forth into the dirty slums and talked to the people about the flag and all the freedom and justice and democracy it stood for.

I kept watching her while she talked. What a handsome woman still, and what exquisite taste and gracious assurance. A new light was in her eyes. Yes, Carrington had gone to France, and she was proud and glad to give him to his country. Giving, giving—it was in the air. My father had gone into the Loan to a ruinous extent, she smilingly informed me. In the house they had let all the servants go but six, including the head chauffeur.

And the meals had been cut down. She had kept her box at the opera, in order to use her influence to keep German music out. German propaganda and German spies were everywhere. Her daughter Louise was working as a clerk in a branch office of the Military Intelligence. And the things she hinted at! Presently Louise came home, elated by several arrests for which she had helped to gather the facts. When Dad came in, he looked to me years older, under a heavy strain. In addition to the work in the mills, he was deep in the Red Cross and several other organizations.

"Glad to see you, son," he said, with a warm grip on my hand. "I'd begun to think you'd not get out alive. The sooner we give up those Russians, the better. They're a poor bet!" he declared.

We went into his study, and there I tried to give him some idea of what I thought Russia needed from us and of how important it was still to keep some vestige of influence there. But he answered grimly,

"It has all come to one question now. Can we get our men to France in time? Everything else must go by the board. Besides," he said in a lower tone, "it does make a difference to have a boy of your own over there, and know that those skulking Russian Reds are making peace and setting free three million Huns for a drive in France! Leave Russia alone! We'll attend to their case later on!"

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3.

Soon after that I took my departure, for Dorothy, who was in town, had already telephoned, and I had promised to go with her out to Seven Pines that night. I dreaded meeting my cousin now. I had not seen her for nearly a year. My going to Russia had mollified her feeling against my stand in the war; but remembering how she had placed her hopes in revolution overseas, I felt that the news I was bringing from Russia would lead again to trouble between us. And so it was a relief to me when something or other delayed her in town and I did not find her on the train.

When I came to Seven Pines it was Aunt Amelia who greeted me. And here at last in this old house I found what I was hungry for. The flag flying on the hill looked so thoroughly at home. It reminded me of so many Decoration Days gone by, from the time when I was a little chap. And Aunt Amelia in the hall, standing near the tall glass case where hung the faded uniform of the army surgeon in the war of long ago, gave me a warm welcome home, led the way into the living room and settled down for a good long talk. The news from Russia was twisted so—she was sure it was, and she wanted the truth.

"Your father gives me one view of it and Dorothy another," she said.

"How is Dorothy now?" I asked. Her mother's face contracted sharply.

"It's the old trouble," she replied, "but so much worse than it was before. She's the wife of a German and therefore a spy!" My aunt's voice quivered with indignation. "In a struggle so tremendous how can people be so small—so stupidly hysterical? They seem to think there is no way of expressing their own loyalty except by hounding day and night the scattered few who oppose the war! And they've done their worst with Dorothy—and this has made her bitter again. She is always talking of Russia now, as though the revolution there were the only hopeful thing in the world. She has been so anxious to have you back."

"I'm afraid I haven't very good news."

"Oh Larry—if you haven't—please be careful what you say."

Soon after this, Dorothy arrived, and in her eager welcome I felt again the trouble ahead. Remembering her tragedy, some realization came to me of what she must have suffered here, as the widow of a German and one who was passionately honest in her hatred of all war. And I tried at first to keep from a clash. But at the various points I made, both for and against the Bolsheviki, by eager interjections she supported all that I said in their favor, but when I talked against them she pursed her lips and looked disdain—as though I were simply proving myself a traitor to the whole radical cause. When I spoke of the peace they were planning to make, she said,

"Oh, if only they can succeed!"

"They will," I answered grimly.

"Then you'll see how all the workingmen in Germany will respond!" she exclaimed. "And then in France and Italy, and even in England—everywhere but over here!" She started in to give her view of the deepening intolerance here. But Aunt Amelia, rising and speaking in a troubled voice, said,

"Please, dear, please—you mustn't now—not when he has just come home."

Dorothy looked at her mother a moment, and then quickly left the room. There was a brief strained silence.

"I'd better not try to see her," I said. "I seem to do more harm than good." My aunt was deep in her own thoughts.

"It will work out, Larry—it will work out," she said in a low resolute tone.

She turned the conversation back to my Russian experience; and after the rebuffs I'd had from others in the family, all of whom without going to Russia knew so much more about it than I, it was a joy to talk with her now. The quick anxious tone of her questions, the determined eagerness in her eyes to believe that even the

Great Revolution, which to her was so strange and grim, was "all for the best" and would work out eventually to a splendid end—are with me still as I look back. The world made safe for democracy. The old religious fervor of her forefathers burned in her faith in that phrase.

"Larry, this is a war," she said, "which before it is through will change the whole point of view of the country. Oh, I daresay we are only human, and there will be many backslidings, of course; but Larry dear, you and Dorothy—for all her present bitterness—will live to see the people here really feeling themselves a part of a family reaching around the earth—and stopping all wars, and steadying down all revolutions—by the growing, growing, growing determination to be fair—and work it all out together—this very puzzling life of ours!"

To her sympathetic ears I outlined what I thought should be our Russian policy; and if my Aunt Amelia had been President of the United States, there is no doubt but what my plan would have been carried out at once. At the end she told me earnestly,

"Your duty is very plain, my dear. Our people are turning against Russia simply because they don't know the truth. You must write as you never wrote before!" She hesitated. "But not here. It will be wiser, as you say, to keep away from Dorothy now. Why don't you go over to Lucy?"

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4.

I stayed with my sister for some weeks. Poor Lucy had had an anxious time. Steve was already over in France, on a big job for the Red Cross; and it had been hard for her to keep the place running since he left. I liked her smiling quiet pluck. She was glad to have me with her while I did my Russian articles. Quickly I settled down to work. The editor of my paper had not been encouraging. He agreed however to run my stuff, and to syndicate my stories to papers all over the country. I wrote hard and fast, for I wanted to finish and at last get over to France. I tried my pigmy damnedest to make people understand that this was no longer a struggle to be finished in a year, but part of a mighty process of change which would still be unfinished when we died, and could never be finished right until the Russians were our friends. This led to several angry talks, as the editor's pencil, red, white and blue, crashed through "this millenium stuff" of mine. Drop such ideas and narrow down to the one big desperate job of getting our men to France in time! That was the one great feverish passion. More and more I realized the hopelessness of my attempt, and I made up my mind to get into the army.

Nor was I the only one. When Tommy came home for Christmas, in spite of his bouyant youth I could feel that this old chum of mine was unnatural, tense to a degree that brought a queer set look on his face.

"What is it, Tommy?" I asked him once.

"Nothing," he answered brusquely. And then after a moment's pause, "What's the use of trying to think this out? It isn't like football—I mean to say, you don't feel like the player, you feel like the ball." Poor Tommy gave a little smile. "The game is so darned big, you see. But there's one advantage in being a ball—you don't have to worry as to your future. By the way," he asked abruptly, "what do you think you're going to do?" I said I hoped to go to France.

"Army?"

"Yes."

A critical look that said very plainly, "You're thin as a rail and forty-two."

"Do you think you can make it?" Tommy asked.

"I've been tipped off that there's a chance." My nephew eyed me anxiously.

"Look here, Uncle Larry—couldn't you wait till Dad comes back?"

"Why?"

"Why——" he hesitated——"it leaves Mother all alone." I looked at him with a quick suspicion.

"She has you, hasn't she?"

"Maybe so, and maybe not. How can a ball tell where it'll be?"

"I can tell where *you* will be, my son," I admonished sternly. "You stick right at school where you belong, till your country is ready to use you!"

"Wait till I'm drafted—two years more? Say, what are you giving me?" Tommy rejoined, with the old twinkle in his eye.

"Exactly," I retorted. "You're a ball and you've got to wait till you're kicked."

"All right, all right," he agreed. "But this particular little ball is not being kicked by some fool rules that a lot of Congressmen have laid down, but by something a lot bigger than that! I tell you I can't help myself—no more than you. I'm sorry for poor Mother—but after all, that's up to Dad. He has done his bit and he ought to come home! I've waited eight months——"

"You're barely eighteen, Tommy——" He grinned and rose to his full height.

"Couldn't I pass for twenty-one?"

"If you want to lie about it," I groaned.

"Oh, thunder," he said cheerfully, "I'm one of the best little liars you know. In fact there's quite a crowd of us, in the senior class at school. We call ourselves 'The Liars.' We know every question they'll ask by heart."

"Look here, old man," I ventured. "How about the Navy?"

"Navy, nix," was his quick reply. "They're all right as far as they go—but it isn't far enough. Me for the trenches!"

There came to me a memory of that night of rain and din out along the German Front.

"Tommy," I said earnestly, "I won't tell your mother about this——"

"You bet you won't!" he threw in.

"But you've got to promise not to make a move in this without letting me know."

"All right, that's fair enough," he agreed.

But only a few days after he had left us to go back to school, a letter came from a training camp; and with a sinking feeling I recognized his handwriting.

"Sorry, old man—but it is just as I told you," Tommy wrote. "I am one of the best little liars you know. When I gave you that promise I meant to keep it—honest I did—but the game is so big—and it got me right on the street in New York. A crowd of our fellows were going by—and right there was a recruiting tent for the U. S. Regular Army—which still thank God takes volunteers. Here is where this little ball takes a stitch in time I remarked. It is time young cousin Carrington quits patting his snobby little chest as the only fighting man in the Hart connection. So in I went—and I lied so well that here I am. What's done is done and I count on you to keep Mother or anyone else in the family from raising a howl about my age. I am such a husk, Uncle Larry—you see how it is—I am such a husk. So I count on you. One good lie deserves another. I want you to lie to Mother now. Tell her I will probably not get over for a year and the war will be ended long before that. And tell her I am in fine shape—a corporal first crack out of the box! Gee but it is good to be through with all that making up your mind! Thank God I used my self-starter! Be sure to emphasize to

Mother that when all is said and done after all *I am such a husk!*"

Lucy took it hard at first. After a long talk with me and another with Aunt Amelia, she decided that if Steve were home he would not try to get Tommy out. But it was not easy. She grew silent and preoccupied, or too obviously cheerful. It was weeks since she had heard from Steve.

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5.

Soon after this I left her to make a trip to Washington, there to seek some help in my scheme to get into the Army Intelligence without being stuck at a desk on this side. I had hopes of landing a job as regimental intelligence officer. This meant going into a camp and taking the regular officer's training. The physcal examination would be hard for me to pass, but I hoped to offset deficiencies by my knowledge of French and German. I did not find it easy. It seemed as though every friend I had was so infernally occupied that it was hours before he could see me; and when he did, he cheerfully sent me on to somebody else. For the drowsy old seat of government was become a seething stew of change. I got so many impressions that I wrote them for my paper one night; and part at least of what I wrote seems worth while including here—if only to remind us, in these fat puffy prosperous days, of how we felt two years ago. I called it, The Great Invasion.

"Washington has been invaded," I wrote, "by an army of ideas—a host of strange new aims and methods born in the clash and din abroad and now entering here to bore and burrow their devious ways deep into our national institutions. We are being driven to drastic powers of control over the whole nation's life. The country has gone service mad and mobilization crazy. For as the Great War rushes into its crisis, we are confronted by the fact that Europe is facing starvation, not only a dearth of food supplies but of all its capital as well. The world's resources are being destroyed with a speed that forces upon us the question, 'How is the world to get going again?' We know that we are a part of it now; we are learning to think ourselves out with a map of the planet before our eyes; and we are beginning to dream new dreams. Yesterday Europe sneered at us for being money-grabbers, for waxing fat while Europe starved and bled and died for big ideals. Well, we are waxing lean these days in our strenuous Yankee fashion, reaching out for those ideals and then adding some of our own—demanding nothing for ourselves but what we ask for everyone else, peace and brotherhood for the world and safety for democracy in all lands and on all seas. We have pledged ourselves to an undertaking wider than most of us guess. One feels the impact every day of a tremendous tonic force on minds that react in such different ways—minds cautious and conservative; minds dogmatic, narrow, hard; minds open, warm and generous. All men are by no means heroes here; there is much petty meanness, egregious blundering and graft. But the *comedie humaine* I have seen is immeasurably deeper than that, and wider in its implications. As in the plays of the ancient Greeks, so here you feel blind forces and tremendous destinies working their will upon us little mortals.

"For in this year of stress and strain, two giant shapes appear to me to be hovering over our heads. The first one is the grim old god of war and savage force and death. The other one is high above, like some huge creature of the air, its outlines still but dimly seen, the spirit of a super-nation which some call a League of Peace. While we blindly worked and schemed in our little gardens of civilization, suddenly war burst upon us like a bleak October gale. It has stripped off the foliage, has swept away the rich soft earth and brought us down with a jar to bed-rock. We are made to feel that this world of ours is no longer safe as we thought it to be. But we are meeting the challenge. We are answering, 'If there must be war, let it be the last. There must be peace and justice and freedom for all nations. And to this task we dedicate our somewhat money-ridden lives, our somewhat misused liberties, our not wholly sacred happiness. For this is no mere calamity, but one of the grandest chances that has ever come to Man'."

Two years have gone since I wrote that sketch, and till Dorothy read it to me last night I had almost forgotten how I used to feel in those days. I did feel like that—I distinctly recall, the night when I wrote it, my grim resolve not to let myself be carried away in all this patriotic glow; I remembered my talk on the German train with the young dramatic critic, and I tried to be sincere and real, admitting our faults and weaknesses, and writing only what I had seen, what I honestly felt to be there. But it was there, to a degree that most of us have forgotten now—that tremendous national will. Keep up morale—throw off all gloom! The whole nation was unconsciously taking to Christian Science, treating itself in great warm waves of determined optimism and faith. In my stuffy hotel room that night I wrote what I saw— but I saw what I wanted. I saw my whole country roused and stirred as never before in my lifetime, I saw the war as a crusade for human liberties everywhere, I saw a future of glorious change moving all humanity on to inexpressibly better days.

And as I look back I am quite ready to defend that point of view. For all its exaggeration, on the whole there was more truth in it than most people now believe, in these blind and prosperous days. It had its faults, its tyranny, intolerance and stupid waste—but without its driving force we might have lost just those few weeks which would have allowed the Germans to break through at Chateau Thierry. And as for the crusade part of it, those glorious changes for the world—this thing is far from finished yet!

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6.

So much for my feeling in Washington. But in spite of my optimism there, it was wonderful nevertheless to get out of that immense welter of plans, of good and bad, of weak and strong, and suddenly to find myself in an officers' training camp; to have cast to the winds my freedom of choice and become a cog in the machine; to have ceased the endless straining to envisage the whole Big Show and narrow to one little part; to learn my job, to rise at dawn and all day long try to do one thing after the other just exactly as I was told; to feel my aching body and nerves respond to this life, to sleep like a log—for the first time in years to sleep without dreaming. I remember being pleased as Punch with almost everything in sight—pleased with the first aches and pains, stiff muscles, joints and blistered feet—for I was in just the mood for that. I was pleased with the endless little jobs and the small gossip of the camp, and the jokes and songs and games of these glorious youngsters. I liked the furious digging into books and manuals, and the classes and the lectures. It took me back to New Haven at times, and yet how different! Lordy God, how these kids worked!

But the pictures have grown dim behind the memories of other camps. I got my commission soon and was transferred to a cantonment—how immense it seemed to me then! I was attached to a regiment of the field artillery. I remember how they rushed the work, how from the start we were made to feel that in another month or so we'd get our orders to entrain—and the deepening impatience! They kept us right up on our toes. Each morning with the captains, most of them hardly more than boys, I lined up before our colonel, a pent-up dynamo of a man who snapped and snarled and shouted, knew nothing of fatigue himself and spared nobody, hurled us on. Soon I could feel the tightening strain in the nerves of the lads who stood rigid there waiting for his next explosion. Out of fourteen captains, two went out of their heads that spring. One I have heard is still insane. The other was an actor, who had once been in a play of mine.

"You know, Hart, old man," he confided, "I never get over the feeling that this whole business is a show. Damn it, I'm acting all the time. When the Colonel bawls me out and I'm there at attention stiff as a post, I'm acting, by God! When I drill my men it's just as bad. I sat in a court-martial the other day. But was I judging? Not a bit! I was playing the part of a judge! And if I do say it," he added, complacently stroking his small mustache, "I played the part damn well, old chap."

Even when the pace got him at last, and he was led off one day in April gibbering like a crazy fool, I could not keep from wondering whether he were not acting still. In a week he was back with us, gay as a lark; and when drill time came around, out he marched to play his part. . . . . He was killed in the Argonne.

The other one, who went insane and stayed insane, was a slim tense sober youngster who seemed to hold the whole war in his eyes. A lad with too much imagination. He and I were close chums for a time. I do not like to think of him now—and almost always I succeed in keeping him out of this room.

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7.

I remember a week-end in March when I came back to Seven Pines. My cousin Dorothy was not here; but Steve had just come home from France, I had not seen him for nearly a year, and the many questions he asked about my trip to Russia took my thoughts far back. But I could not hold my mind to it. Now he in turn was telling of the seething restlessness of labor in France and England; but try as I would, I could not keep from fairly yawning in his face. It was ten o'clock, my bedtime. With a jerk I pulled up from a doze. Steve smiled over his cigarette, and drowsily I heard his voice:

"Healthy as a dormouse, eh?"

The insult woke me up a bit, and I questioned him for a few minutes more. Then back came my mind to the one grim job. Now in a few weeks we'd be off. Steve asked what I'd seen of Tommy in camp; and catching the anxiety in that quiet voice of his, I kept awake for a half hour more while I told of the glimpses I'd had of the boy and the brief talks with him now and then. Tommy's infantry regiment was in the same Division as mine. Already made a sergeant, he was doing splendidly. I tried to enlarge on the details of his unfailing genial cheer and his popularity. But I had seen him scarcely at all, and it was very hard to draw on my imagination that night. A few minutes later somebody laughed and told me to go to bed. I did.

The next day I went to church with my aunt; and there I heard Steve's father, who was nearly eighty years old, urge the village on to the war. Taking slavery for his theme, he spoke first of our Civil War. With the sword we had set the black man free; and now we were on a greater crusade, to emancipate all the slaves in the world. He spoke of the Armenians and described the day in this village when we had sent a missionary out to that unhappy land. We had been like that. But the Germans? They had always supported the Turks and had even instigated the massacres in Armenia. He drew a lurid picture of the butcheries over there and of the Belgian atrocities. Germany stood for despotism and for bloody conquest. But the vengeance of the Lord would soon be upon them; for we, his chosen instruments, must crush this German nation, break its strength and shatter its pride, so that never again could it menace the world!

But it did not seem to me that the congregation responded to this terrible old Puritan's darkly emotional appeal. As we came out I heard somebody murmur, "How he does love to paint pictures of Hell—whether in this life or the next." And a red-haired youngster home from camp demanded in a loud clear voice,

"Gee, Mother, can't you think up something a little more cheerful in the way of entertainment when I come home?"

A minority there, I think, thoroughly approved of the sermon; and later this minority grew. But through the conflict to the end, the view of most Americans was more nearly expressed, I believe, by Aunt Amelia and her kind. Sorely wounded deep inside by the attacks on Dorothy, she had no use or patience for the haters all about. Hiding her own trouble as something she must bear alone, patient and kind with this daughter of hers in the faith that out of these bitter days there would come a happier time, convinced of the rightness of the cause for which her country had entered the war, she took it into her religion now. "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord." My Aunt Amelia's eyes were fixed upon the great awakening, the new vision in the land. Rumors of possible defeat, of blunders, graft, red tape and the like, made little or no impression upon her. She felt the great work forging on, and she was sure we should be in time.

"We must never let ourselves doubt it—not for one moment!" she declared.

But she saw more than winning the war. In countless little ways she felt how the village through its sons was opening its eyes to the world. She watched the service flags appear in almost every window; and she knew the stories behind them, for the Red Cross work she was doing kept her in touch with the women and took her frequently into their homes. Many letters came to her from the West, and eagerly she gleaned the news of the Great Coming Together, not only in work for the soldiers but out on the ranches and the farms. Here was brotherhood at last, and brotherhood of a practical kind—a kind that would work, yet did its work not for any selfish profit but for a world-wide ideal! Even New York had discovered its soul. From the big shop windows all along Fifth Avenue, the rich gowns and hats and jewels were giving way to make room for other appeals. She told of one large window which had formerly been arranged to represent a boudoir. "Everything," my aunt declared, "that no decent woman wants was there." Now it was gone and in its place was the inside of a Belgian hut, with a woman and some starving children. Even New York had become like that! What must the rest of the country be? She read me a letter from the West describing a farmer's auction for the benefit of the Red Cross. During the auction a flock of wild geese passed high overhead on their way up North. The auctioneer was quick to act.

"How much am I offered," he shouted, "for them geese up in the clouds? Lively now! It's for the Red Cross!" And the bidding was so fast, that while the geese were still in sight he was shouting, "Ninety dollars for the flock! Ninety dollars for the flock! Make it a hundred! Do your bit! A hundred I'm offered! Going at that! Going, going, going—gone!" And the geese disappeared in a distant cloud.

She had many similar incidents. As the troops poured into the port to embark, the sons of her many friends in the West came to see her at Seven Pines; and they told her what she wanted to know. Already she was writing to several who had gone to France; and as she sat at her desk by a window, her fancy often travelled far.

"Sometimes it seems to me, Larry," she said, "that I can feel the women at windows all over the world, my dear—writing letters to men and boys, or knitting or rolling bandages, or at cradles or by the beds of the sick—women in those moments when as we work we can very quietly think and think about it all. And I have such a feeling then of our all thinking and feeling together. A kind of a world sense it is. I never have had it before in my life."

This was what the war had done, she said. From this time forth all peoples would understand each other better, and with that would come a friendliness so vast that the enemy countries, too, would be swept into the brotherhood.

In brief, like so many of her kind, she saw only what she wanted to see—and what she wanted was only good.

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8.

But others could see only the bad—and Dorothy was one of them. On my brief visits home she was not here. I could feel her mother arranged it so, and I was grateful. It would have been hard. Not that I blamed her. I do not still. The persecutions she had to endure, although as petty as they were stupid, still were very real to her and kept the wound of her bitterness open by vicious little thrusts. One of her tormentors lived in the next house down the hill. With two sons already in France, this woman in her searching for some way to do her bit had made of herself an amateur sleuth, and almost everything she did was comic—until you saw its effects. She simply could not understand why Dorothy was not in jail. The evidence was so complete! Here was a girl who had married a German, had gone with him to Germany and there no doubt had encouraged him in preparing gas attacks. Not content with that, she had inveigled her two American cousins over to the land of the Huns—one aiding as a surgeon to put disabled soldiers back at the front to kill our Allies, the other by his writings helping to spread the German lies. Then this writer had gone to Russia; and shortly after he arrived, that unhappy country had gone over to the German side! Moreover, now the surgeon was in his sanitarium high up on a hill overlooking the Sound. Signal lights had been seen on that hill—while Dorothy, also on a hill, had raised or lowered her window shades and had kept her bedroom lighted often until nearly dawn!

Not once but half a dozen times did this patriotic neighbor send officials of various kinds to Dorothy's home to arrest her. They were met by Dorothy's mother here, and after she had talked with them they went away quite satisfied. But the woman then went over their heads; she sent letters and petitions to government agencies far and near. A friend of mine in the M. I., with whom I dined one night in New York, said to me in exasperation,

"Confound these hysterical women! They pour in so many false alarms that our office is swamped, and we waste the time that we ought to spend in running the real enemy down!"

Against such constant torment, Dorothy reacted by growing steadily more intense. From her own experience she made sweeping generalities. Reading the newspapers each day, her mind and imagination seized upon all evidence of injustice and oppression. God knows there was enough of that. But she made no allowance for the terrific rush of those days; nor did she seem to have any sense of the real treason in the land, the thousands of German agents here who succeeded in blowing up mills by the score and would have blown up hundreds had not they been caught in time. Moreover, the truth as I saw it then about our country in the war, in spite of all the blunders and the needless tyrannies, still held so much of the widening vision and the mighty stimulus which Dorothy's mother felt in it all, that even now as I look back, her view—idealized though it was—seems immeasurably nearer the truth.

And at the time I could see nothing else; for in those anxious months of spring the German armies were rapidly driving deeper into France; the morale of the French and English seemed at last about to break; and the question "Can we be in time?" was the one big topic in the camps. Down in my cantonment, caught in the general tensity, the same change had occurred in myself which I had noticed in others on my return from Russia. How remote it seemed, all that, and how unimportant, compared to the grim urgency here!

On my last leave of absence, I came home to Seven Pines so dog-tired that right after supper I went to bed. For a little while I lay awake listening to the quivering hum which came from Dad's munition mills, and to the endless motor trucks thundering along the road at the foot of our hill on their way to New York. All over the country, day and night, I could feel the work, the straining to build, to forge, to drill.

"In a month I shall be over there."

I had strained my arm the day before. It was stiff, and after I fell asleep I must have thrashed about a bit—for I awoke with a slight start. My pillow was gone. I lay there a moment in the dark vaguely groping in my mind for some dim memory from the past. Ah, now I had it! Goblins! A night nearly forty years before when I was a little shaver, and Ed and I had slept in this room. This time I did not shut my eyes; but when

I had picked up the pillow from the floor beside my bed, I lay for some time longer drifting in the memories of that little stranger of long ago. How many goblins had come since then, creeping up in the darkness—then slipping away. And now the war.

I heard a car come up the hill; it stopped at the door, and a little later I heard Dorothy's voice on the stairs. I was wide awake now. Did she know I was here? After all, we had been together here so many years—ever since we were children. She had been like a kid sister. . . . I heard her stop before my door.

"Is that you, Dorothy?"

"Oh, you're awake. . . . I was afraid I'd miss you. Mother says you have to leave early tomorrow."

"Yes—at five." There was a pause.

"Are you very sleepy?"

"No, no—I'll be right down."

"Oh, don't do that—you must be so tired." The door opened, and in the path of light I saw her like a shadow. "Let me just come in for a moment," she said, "and then I'll let you go to sleep."

"I'm not sleepy now. Wide awake as an owl." As she came in and sat down in the dark, I told about my pillow and the goblin night of long ago. We laughed a little.

"I've brought you something. Listen," she said. And a moment later I heard the tinkle of little chimes. "It's the watch Mother gave me to use over there. Don't you remember? You brought it with you—to Berlin. Wouldn't you like it?"

"Yes," I said. She came and put it in my hand, and I held hers for a moment.

"You understand?" she whispered. "I can't feel as you do about the war—but I'll be so glad—so glad when it's over, and you are back again with us, dear!"

"Don't go yet," I begged her. "There's a whale of a goblin here tonight. He has been hanging 'round for the last six months—trying to spoil all we've been to each other. The only way to chase him out is to laugh at him, and talk and talk."

So we talked of the jolliest foolishest times, and we did not speak of the war at all. But I spoke again of that goblin night and then of goblins large and small, friendly ones and nasty ones that come leering and poking and elbowing into good people's lives to torment them—then get tired and slink away.

"I won't see you again before you go," she said softly, at the end. "Goodnight, Larry dear."

I saw her once more for a moment in the path of light through the door. Then she shut it, and again it was dark.

CHAPTER XVIII

1.

Just before we left for France, Steve brought Lucy and Aunt Amelia out to Camp Mills to say goodbye. It was a hot muggy day in May. The big embarkation camp had space for two divisions, some sixty thousand men and boys. It was already nearly full, and into that big city of tents along the dusty roads and paths still more troops were pouring in. Their tramping feet kept clouds of yellow dust in the air—dust on the tents and the low buildings, dust on the boots and uniforms, dust on the very flags they bore, dust on faces, lips and eyes—dust of the everyday labor of war, the hard bleak job of learning to kill. And as this dust hung in the air, so too it seemed to lie thick on the minds and feelings of these fighting men.

I glanced at Aunt Amelia. What a pity she had come out here, bang up against realities. I could see her flinch a bit at first but adjust herself as time went on; and in the questions that she asked I could feel her getting down through the dust to some of the deeper feelings here. As I recounted various significant little things I had heard from these big dusty sweating boys, I could feel her making them a part of her own dauntless vision. All the dust that was here, I thought, would soon drop away in her memories, and all would be idealized as her beloved West had been. And I was glad that it was so.

But our thoughts were mainly of Tommy that day. His regiment was camped next to mine. Soon he joined our little group; and after leaving in his tent the chocolate and cigarettes and other gifts from his family, young Sergeant McCrea came back to us. In every word he uttered he was consciously and deliberately and very youthfully commonplace. He did not propose to let us think that he felt himself a hero now. To remove any possible semblance of a halo from his close-cropped head, Tommy scratched it from time to time and made various jocose remarks which his mother considered "disgusting." But we who knew the boy so well could feel in the conscious genial tone, and again in his occassional brusque and self-absorbed replies, what a mere youngster he was still—grimly keeping himself in hand, not allowing his mind to dwell upon what loomed so close ahead, at moments half exultant and eager for the Big Show over there, again uncertain and afraid. He was still inarticulate, but the whole honest soul of him was groping for a few big thoughts, a few strong driving reasons as to why all this must be. And above all, "nerve"—no flinching!

At last a bugle call was heard.

"That means me," said Tommy, getting quickly to his feet. He hesitated for a moment. "Well, goodbye, Mumsy—see you soon." One after the other he kissed the women, with a gruff goodbye to each. For an instant he gripped his father's hand, then turned to do the same with me, and caught himself only just in time. He reddened, loudly cleared his throat, and the next moment he was hurrying off. In long lines the companies were forming in the lanes between the tents. We watched him forming his platoon into their place in the dusty ranks; and for a moment after that we watched him rigid as a post. Then in a voice abrupt and low, Lucy said,

"Let's go now, Steve."

I walked with them to their car at the gate, where after another round of goodbyes they left me to go back to town.

. . . .

2.

With a number of other officers I embarked the day before we sailed. Our ship was one of the big fellows—it took nearly ten thousand men that trip—and to my delight I discovered that Tommy's regiment was on the list. I telephoned the news to Steve, and he succeeded through the Red Cross in gaining admittance to the pier. He came down that evening, and for some time we walked in the big shadowy dockshed. We talked very little. From time to time more troops poured in, and the big keen eyes of my companion kept searching the faces as they came bobbing, lurching by. Still no Tommy. Our huge ship was already swarming with brown-clad men, and under the hard blue quivering glare of the arc lights more brown figures were pressing, pressing in long files slowly up the gang-planks. I knew how Steve felt for this only son, become so abruptly one of the millions of atoms hurled into the storm. Steve had seen so much of the *horrors* of war. It had aged him. Though his powerful figure was as tall and erect as before, there was more gray about his temples, heavier markings beneath his eyes. And they looked—deeper into things. All at once he gave a little start, and then stood very quietly watching Tommy pass close by in the din and confusion, his face excited, tired, strained, eyes fixed on two smiling women serving coffee just ahead. Soon he was laughing with one of them, as she filled his big tin cup. Then he pressed on up into the ship.

We had quite a hunt till we found him there. Because many of these sons of the land, from inland cities, towns and farms, had never seen the ocean before, to each one as he came on board was handed a card which gave the location of his bunk and named the various parts of the boat. And as they searched for their places, the whole vessel seemed to shake with the constant tread of heavy feet. It had a naked look, this ship; but it teemed and hummed with activities. Through long narrow passageways and up and down steep flights of stairs we made our way. And at last, deep down in the vessel, in a bunk-room crowded with steel framed bunks by hundreds, four tiers high, from the floor close up to the ceiling, in one we found Tommy sound asleep. It was stifling hot down here; and though his brown shirt was open, his neck and face were wet with sweat. But his respiration was long and deep, and he was snoring peacefully.

"No use in waking him up," muttered Steve. For a few moments he stood looking down. Just as he was about to go, with a sudden toss of one arm and a snort, Tommy opened his eyes, saw his father there, blinked hard and fast in startled surprise, and uttered a thick whisper:

"Dad!"

"Hello, son."

They were gripping hands.

"How did *you* get here?" Tommy asked. For a time they talked in whispers, and then after a brief hesitation and obvious struggle, "Look here, old man," Tommy blurted out, "there's a thing I meant to speak about—and didn't—couldn't get a chance."

"Say it," said Steve, with a tense smile.

"Oh, it isn't much. It's only that—well, I just want you to know that I'm on to the fact of how you feel. You'd give your coat and pants and vest for a chance to be with us. Darned pity you can't." Tommy spoke in a low hurried tone, scowling down at his father's crippled hand. "It's your own fault," he muttered. "So long as you *would* be a surgeon, and cripple your hand in time of peace—hero of peace—that sort of stuff—"

Tommy grinned to show he was joking—"you can't expect to have *all* the fun. But anyhow," he added, "if I'd run as many hospitals in this war as you have, I guess I'd feel I'd done my bit. Sorry, though, you can't be with us. . . . Gee, how hot it is down here! Why the devil can't the War Department open the portholes while we're in port!" Tommy was more natural now. "Say, Uncle Larry, don't you suppose they'd let me up on deck with you, just for a couple of minutes or so?"

We went on deck. It was cool and fresh—just daybreak. The light was misty, blue, unreal. Sharp orders, and long gangs of men at the huge hawsers on the pier. It was sailing time. Steve left us; and a few minutes later, as the big vessel moved slowly out, he stood in a gangway of the pier looking steadily up at us, with a quiet smile that reminded me of the days when Steve was Tommy's age nearly thirty years ago. Suddenly he was swept from our view, and now I grew conscious of Tommy's big hand which had been tightly gripping my arm. He let go and cleared his throat. Then he said a bit thickly,

"Much obliged, Uncle Larry, for fixing it—getting me up on deck, I mean." He looked about in a lost sort of way. "Gee, but I'm tired. Me for the slats."

. . . .

3.

With an empty let-down feeling, for a time I walked the decks, where in place of the long double rows of steamer chairs of former days were only a few benches, and not even these were occupied long. Nobody seemed to care to sit down. Soon I joined the restless throng of big-booted boys who tramped and tramped all over the boat—now stopping for long silent stares out over the rail toward the shore-line which was rapidly sinking behind; then again tramping, tramping on, alone or in couples or larger groups, exploring the big liner, curious, prying, laughing, joking. The boat had been built by the Germans, and in the narrow passageways the painted panels were still on the walls. In front of one, a floral design rather "Dutchy" in style, I saw two young Buddies pause with an air of determined disapproval; and I heard one of them say to the other,

"You know, these Germans just naturally make everything ugly that they touch. That's a hell of a bunch of pansies, that is!"

And the pair moved slowly on.

I came to what in peace time had been a gorgeous dining saloon. Now there were long board tables there at which sat boys playing checkers or cards or writing letters. More were about the gramophones, and a crowd was singing around the piano. The bunk rooms that I visited were half filled with sleepers, but in one an anxious-looking boy was scowling over a notebook and repeating determinedly,

"Je vowdrais oon cigarette—je vowdrais oon cigarette——"

Close by lay Tommy in his bunk, with hands locked behind his head, scowling and staring straight above him. Plainly he wished to be alone.

I slept the greater part of the day. When I came out on deck that night, the land lights were already gone, and at first I saw only a dark expanse—the same empty ocean I had known on previous voyages during the war. But as my eyes grew used to the darkness, looking ahead and then behind, with a sudden start and thrill I discovered a long procession of blurred misty little lights extending off into the night. The convoy was in single file—a dim spectral bridge of lights reaching out across the sea.

I remember little else of the trip, except a talk with Tommy one day when the voyage was nearly at an end. I had seen little of him till then; I could feel he was avoiding me. Plainly he did not care to be seen making capital of the fact that his uncle was an officer. He himself was one of the crowd, and he enjoyed it thoroughly. In his regiment all kinds and races, rich and poor, had been thrown together and rapidly welded into a mass, which had developed a life of its own; and into this life Tommy entered with a genial zest and vim. They seemed more like a crowd of boys off to some big college game. Their spare time was filled with jokes and songs. They joked even over the life-boat drill. And how they dozed and blinked in the sun, or leaned lazily over the rail and idly spit into the sea. . . . But with Tommy one afternoon, as we stood at the rail together, I asked him to give me his idea of how the Buddies looked at it all. And after a long frowning stare out over the ocean, Tommy said:

"I'll tell you, Uncle Larry—the way I size it up is this. All this talk about how we are going to make a new world—kind of heaven on earth, so to speak—is mostly trimmings to most of the fellows. They're pretty hazy about it—they don't think much, they haven't time. You know the life—how it has been in camp—and I guess there'll be more'n enough to do when we get over."

He stopped for a moment. Tommy had such honest eyes.

"Put the Kaiser out of business," he went on reflectively. "Then the Austrian Emperor What's-his-name—and show the Turks where *they* get off. And after that, use all our pull to get a whole bunch of good free countries started up all over the map. Democracy? Sure. But—" again he stopped and his voice dropped low—— "with all due respect to the President, he does lay it on just a little bit thick about America, doesn't he now? Oh, it's all right, I suppose—good for morale—keeps the whole business kind of way up. And there's a whole lot of truth in it, too. I'm not knocking my country, understand—and I'm proud of it, proud as hell—I'll bet we're a whole lot decenter than any other country on earth. But we just aren't perfect—that's what I mean—never were and never pretended we were. I used to listen to you and Dad talk about that year in the slums. And when a fellow thinks of that—slums and strikes and so on—and the way Aunt Fanny throws money about—well, we aren't angels—that's what I mean. Take young Carrington. What in thunder does he care about democracy?" Here again Tommy paused and scowled. "It's a complicated business," he said. "Take Russia, too, on the other hand. From what you say of these Bolsheviks, there's such a thing as being *too* free—with everybody losing his head. What's Europe coming to, anyhow? *We* certainly don't want to be like that. And so I say when you try to stop and figure what this war's about, you're up against a mighty big question!

"But that's not worrying us a lot," he continued, in an easier tone. "You know what the war has done to us? It has made us feel like kids again."

I shot a quick startled look at him. There he stood, nearly six-feet-two, with set jaw and serious eyes.

"Take my case," this man went on. "I'd just about grown up, so to speak. I was free to do about as I liked—smoke and so on—think for myself. And it was the same with the rest—we'd all begun to lead our own lives. Then, biffo, zowie, came the war and jerked us in—and we've *lost* our lives." He suddenly reddened. "I mean, we're not free. You know how it has been in camp. You're a drop in the bucket, ordered around. Every minute of your day is your country's. You're fed and clothed—and if you're not, there's no use kicking—none at all. You're a two-spot and your life is small. The war has happened and scooped you in. So what's the use of worrying? . . . Anyhow, that's about how we feel—more or less," he muttered.

"That's about it, son."

And we lit cigarettes.

It was only one day after this that we came into the danger zone. We met a destroyer that morning, our own. Then a British hydroplane appeared. The rumor spread that an enemy U-boat was close by, and the tension quickly deepened. No more waiting, no more guessing. Here at last was the Big Show. And it was as though, from the continent still invisible ahead, a great grim inner voice had come out to meet us, and of every man and boy on the ship was demanding,

"Well, son , how's your nerve?"

Of our two days in England, I remember only crowded trains, long delays and hasty meals and sleep in snatches. Late at night we embarked for France on a little boat that wallowed deep in the trough of a rough nasty sea. It was raining hard, and the seasick Buddies lying in piles on the crowded decks were soaked to the skin. It was pitch dark. But as in the early morning we came to the shores of France, the heavy rain clouds broke away and a great radiant dazzling sun rose over the hills of Havre. In the confusion of landing, I came upon Tommy and gripped his hand.

"Good luck, Tommy!"

"Same to you!" And he hurried away.

The colonel of his regiment must have had something of the dream of Aunt Amelia in him then. For he ordered out the band, and up along a winding road he took his regiment into the hills, toward that clear glorious morning sun, to the tune of, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord."

And that was the last I ever saw, or will ever see, of Tommy.

. . . .

4.

All through July and August, my regiment was billeted in a little village through which ran a long straight road. Close by the road was a railroad track; and along the track and along the road came a double procession day and night—trains, motor lorries, wagons, carts; men, provisions, shells and guns. But the village seemed so used to it all, and took it, in the heat and dust, as it had done these four long years. How hot it could be in that tiny town, and at times how desperately still. Only one store, a tobacco shop, and two dirty little cafés. On either hand a straggling row of frame and stucco dwellings. Behind, a level landscape dotted with tent villages. Here the Yanks soon settled down. Gone was the grim tension now. Curious and glad to be here, boasting of what they would do, and quickly learning a few words of such French as was never heard before, the Buddies talked and laughed with the girls and were free with their money at the cafés, offering it in handfuls and joking over the change they got. But soon this cheerfulness disappeared. They grumbled at the prices and were unutterably bored in this dull little place with its dust and heat.

"I thought there was once somthin' said about our coming here for a *war!*" growled a fat little Buddy one day.

There were growls, not only against the French but against the British Tommies, too, who as they passed through the place made ribald jokes at our expense. The first exhilaration was gone. The days were crowded with hard work, and it was amazing how quickly these lads settled into the new routine—of work, drill, gossip, jokes and grumbles, games—as in the camp at home.

Although I was busy as the rest and entered into the work with zest as a relief from useless thinking, still there were times when memories rose of what I had seen in the last four years. One day to our camp came a large stout chap with a desperately worried air, who confided to me that he had a contract to write the history of the war. So far, he had planned for some forty large volumes and was organizing a staff of writers all over the face of the earth. In touch with him by mail and cable, these men were gathering great stacks of original documents, giving all the causes back to about the time of the Flood.

"Even Argentina's part is so damned interesting!" he groaned.

My talk with him brought back the thoughts of how the world was breaking into a vast confusion now, of which the war was but a part. How many years or generations till things finally settled down? A new world order to be builded out of the turgid chaos here, in other wars and revolutions, endless talk and speeches, books, political campaigns and strikes. . . . Two or three times with the officers I tried to talk of these gropings into what the war would bring; but I found little interest in such ideas or vistas. Here was only the daily grind; they were all businesslike, these chaps; and when evening came they were tired out. They made me think of other men who long ago on Broadway had come to our theatres at night wanting only to be amused. The tired business man of the past had become the tired soldier.

Early in August came a change. Into the dusty village swept the new tidings from the front. The Huns had been stopped! The Big Push was on! The tide had turned, and now at last the war was rushing to its end! The effect upon us was deep and sharp. Men and officers, old and young, had but one thought: "Can we get there in time?" I was caught in that deep eagerness, the strain kept tightening, tightening, and other thoughts were swept aside. When at the end of another month the order came and we entrained, as the crowded cars moved out the Buddies all began to sing. And there flashed into my mind the picture of those German lads singing *"Heilige Nacht"* on Christmas Eve. Soon we would be facing their line!

From that night on, as I look back, it is all a blur in my memory—the scattered incidents jumbled in, one upon another. Here and there is a face or a phrase that caught my attention at the time, together with various names of towns, villages and little streams. And endless numbers I recall, numbers of hills, divisions, regiments, batteries and guns; and names of officers high and low, and bits of orders of the day.

As the sun set over a level plain, out of the west came rushing a long line of army trucks, fantastic in their camouflage and packed with husky noisy Yanks. Two French peasants in a field at first waved caps and then threw kisses—but the genial Yanks replied derisively, with thumb to nose. . . . Boom—boom—from the distant guns. A battalion coming back from the trenches, wiping from their faces the sweat and the thick yellow dust. Some lurched by as though asleep. One of them stumbled and fell on his shoulder, uttered a quick startled "Hell!" and got up and hurried back into line. . . . We met small groups of wounded men, with hands or arms or heads bound up, and others limping slowly along. . . . We came behind a long low hill and passed a quiet meadow with hundreds of graves all overgrown with cornflowers, poppies, buttercups. . . . In the deepening dusk, the distant booms changed to jarring crashes now. On the road ahead came a flash and a roar—and I saw a horse screaming and kicking up dust with his hind legs, straining hard to raise his head, with terror in his greenish eyes. . . . But again we left the noise behind. Our road wound through deep ravines and up long wooded hillsides. And in a dark drizzling rain we came to a spectral hill town where part of our division had been billeted for the night.

After that, a long blank in my memory.

Then a dugout in a hillside—a long delicious sleep in there—and out at night, feeling like a new man. The muggy drizzle of the day had been swept away by a cool strong wind, and the stars were glorious in the sky. It was brilliant in the valley below, with rockets white and green and red, and the sudden flare and glow of guns. Crash and boom and crackle, the long sharp rattle of the machine guns, all came rolling up together in an angry sea of sound. From one of our batteries close above me came a roar that shook the hill. I climbed up by a steep little path through the pines—and what I did there I cannot recall. I think I had a message from the colonel down below, and that later I smoked a cigarette with the young lieutenant in charge of the guns. I must have been there until dawn, for I have a picture sharp and clear of a dwarfed little pine in the first raw light, its needles silvery with dew, and a sodden old bird's nest clinging to one of its wet branches. A German shell must have burst close by—for there was a dazzling flash, and up sailed my little tree into the skies. Something seemed to crackle and crash somewhere deep inside my head. Then it stopped and I drifted rapidly down into the silent dark. Not a glimmer or a sound.

. . . .

5.

I was roused by a headache sharper than any I had ever known. I heard a voice and opened my eyes—and they opened all right, but still there was nothing but the same blackness as before. I felt a dull pain in one leg. "Easy with him, easy now." I felt them lift me. Then I fainted. . . . I remember an ambulance ride, and dressing times when the pain bit in. I felt a hand wiping the sweat from my forehead, and I heard a woman's voice as she jabbed a needle into my arm. Suddenly the pain was gone. I lay on the ground in the cool outer air and smiled to myself. It was wonderful. I heard that woman's voice again. What did it remind me of? Ah, now I had it—Dorothy—in a theatre all filled with beds. But what a damn fool place for beds! Now I knew I was out of my head. For a theatre—wait a moment—yes, a theatre was a place filled with women in evening clothes! "No, sir—beds! Packed full of 'em! Hell, yes! War! Now I've got it all right!" I gave a low laugh and dropped again down into the soundless dark.

I heard voices singing, and the sound took me careering up to the stars. Now and then I nearly hit one. Golly, but that was a narrow escape! . . . Queer how I could soar like that, and yet know all the while I was on a train, in a hot narrow bunk, with wounded men and boys about. I could hear them groan and swear at times, and I heard a chap close by me die. I heard his rapid gasping breath, with now and then a "Betty, Betty!" whispered so close it seemed right in my ear. All at once his breathing stopped. "He's dead," I thought. . . . How that wretched little French car bumped and lurched as it bore us on. And my body was so devilish light I could not keep it in the bunk. Bump, bump, bump—the car would bump me up again into the stars. . . . Once I came down to find it still. We must have been at a station, for just outside my window I could hear an old French woman very slowly and carefully giving somebody her special receipt for *soup a l'onion.* I listened as though my very life depended on not missing a word.

Now I was in a bed with sheets. I could move my limbs to cooler spots, and I smiled with a drowsy dull content. The pain in my leg was half asleep, and the ache in my head was so much better! If only that surgeon would leave me alone! Once when he came and I lay waiting, quivering, tense, I heard him say,

"A long thin splinter went in at one temple. The eyes themselves are not affected. The trouble is in the optic nerve region."

Only the nerves! So that was it! How long would I be blind, I wondered? Then the dressing! Then the morphine! These were the two big events of my day. The dressing once; the needle twice. Dorothy's watch was under my pillow, and the chime of its tiny bells was a godsend in the dark. Slowly I became aware, in this strange new inner life, that my other ties with the outside world were rapidly growing more acute. Eagerly I sniffed the odor of coffee or of cigarettes, and the slightest whiff of tobacco smoke was an exasperating delight. But this was nothing compared to what my good old ears were up to. I could tell the step of the nurse I liked from the creaky tread of the one I detested. I grew to know the whole life of the ward by the sounds. Some were loud and obvious, but others that came in the night were subtle, low, uncanny, like thoughts drifting into me. I began to grow proud of these ears of mine. I won five dollars on a bet that I could hear a handkerchief dropped at the other end of the ward.

Into the ward every day or so came fresh arrivals from the front. Hungrily we gleaned from them the latest news of the Big Push that was throwing the Germans out of France. But I dreaded the nights when these chaps came, because invariably the ones who had been badly wounded raved in nightmares like lost souls, with savage piercing bestial cries that came without warning out of their darkness into mine. Early one evening I was roused by a commotion in the next ward, which was full of enlisted men. Our nurses were called in to help, and soon I learned that the boys in there were being moved out to make room for a crowd that was coming. I caught the word, "gassed." My mind leaped back to Dorothy's husband; and though he was dead, I grew bitter against his work that night. For through the thin door to my sensitive ears came a stifled bedlam of groans and cries. A nurse hurried in to ask for help from some of our convalescents. Two young Irish-American second lieutenants followed her back; and all through the rest of the night I could hear them holding tight in their arms the poor devils who died. Once I caught the words:

"All right, old man—I'm right here with a pencil and paper. . . . What's that? . . . I've got it. Now what next?"

There were other nightmares in that place. Thank God, I've forgotten most of them. The days and nights wore into weeks, and I grew thoroughly sick of it all; tired of being shut up in my head. If only I could get out through my eyes! But they were still bandaged; and the ache above them, though for days it would leave me in peace, would then tackle me again like a mean vicious little dog. My thinking grew bitter. I was old. While the youngsters around me quickly recovered, I was little better than before. I had moods of a desperate hunger to get back home and live again, start something different, fresh and new!

I awoke abruptly one afternoon, straining my ears. What had I heard? I caught the hum and murmur of voices from all over the ward, an occasional laugh, someone singing a song—but that was only old, old stuff. Why had I wakened, listening so?

"Who spoke to me?" I asked aloud.

Then I felt a hand on mine, and I heard Tommy speak my name.

. . . .

6.

Tommy had stopped a rifle bullet two weeks after I was hit, on the same sector of our line, where the Boches were slow in giving way. He had won his second lieutenant's commission only a few days before. While leading his men he had been hit and had pitched into a funk-hole that was partly full of gas. A wounded man had pulled him out just in time to save his life; but Tommy, like me, had been left blind. In the hospital here, however, the wound in his shoulder had quickly healed. These kids, what quick recoverers! And as for his eyes, a surgeon had told him the chances were a hundred to one that he would soon see again. Already out of the dark room, though he still wore a bandage, his old buoyancy had returned.

"Golly, what damned queer glorious luck, our getting together!" Tommy cried. "I *thought* there might be some fellows I knew, so I got the nurse to read me the names of all the fellows in the place. And when your name came out of the list, I had a riot all by myself! So here I am, by Jimminy!"

Our talk that day, and others that followed, did so much to buck me up that soon I was getting about on his arm. Feeling his way along with a stick, Tommy called gayly down the aisle,

"Make way for the lame, the halt and the blind!"

Then came the news of the Armistice, and after the celebration that night we thought of little but getting home. The days dragged on. Why this delay? And why no word from our family? There had been not a single home letter for weeks, and we cursed the confusion of government mails. Had they all forgotten us back there?

CHAPTER XIX

1.

No, they had not forgotten us; but it was not until late in October that they learned we had been wounded. Up to that time, one letter from me and a couple of post cards from Tommy were all the messages that reached home of the many we had written. The others were either lost or delayed. Meanwhile, despite their anxiety, the life of the family had gone on.

After seeing us off in June, life sagged dismally for Steve. Twice he tried to get over to France, but his work kept piling up at home. Already the wounded were coming back, and the big receiving hospitals in New York were still in confusion; Steve was drawn into that work and was soon hopelessly involved. In August, Aunt Amelia was taken suddenly very ill; but after an anxious period, through the sheer force of the will that was in her, she fought her way back into life. During her brief illness my father was almost constantly there, and Steve and he had several talks. Dad was one of those whom Steve described as Lost Americans. For him the old familiar ways and standards had been swept aside. Government officials were forever coming in to interfere with his business; and meanwhile in his own war work he found himself constantly interfering with the business of other men. Half consciously he was taking part in radical sweeping changes, and vaguely aware of this at times, he confessed to Steve his uneasiness over what he felt was ahead.

But no such grim uncertainties troubled Aunt Fanny or Louise. They had closed the place in Newport and were spending the summer in town. They were still working hard all day, but as a rule their evenings were free for the dinners, balls and pageants, through which patriots like themselves were doing their bit. For the pageants Louise was in great demand; she was always having new costumes made. One night she was a Sister of Mercy, again a ragged Belgian girl, and again the Spirit of France. Once she was perfectly furious because a very catty friend had handed her "Portugal" as a part. Europe sent many Tories here, quite a few of them with titles, and many of these were welcome guests at delightfully informal dinners in my father's home. Among them was a young Britisher, a very decent likable lad, who had been wounded several times. Louise and he were soon well launched in a promising love affair.

Young Carrington came home from France early in September. Having been slightly wounded and sent back to help train troops, he was welcomed in his home like a young god come down to earth. And his war talk had no nonsense about it. Crush the Huns and then get back to the sunny well bred world that they had known before the fight. Moreover, a brief talk with him left Steve with the impression that in the mind of this youngster his duty toward society had been filled completely for the remainder of his life. He had offered his life for his country, and thereby had justified not only his own existence but the entire old order of things. To preserve it was his one thought now. With the Huns already practically licked, he proposed to devote his energies to rooting out the Huns in our midst, and the sneaking Bolsheviki, too!

These opinions he declared on a visit to Aunt Amelia, and he was keenly annoyed by the presence of his cousin Dorothy there. She listened with a look in her eyes that set his blood to boiling. Quite honestly convinced of the truth of his own convictions, he went to such extremes in his talk that at last in a sharp quivering voice Dorothy interrupted. The Germans were no worse, she cried, than any other people at war! France and England had their faults! And as for the Russian revolution, it was the one big hope for the world! At this young Carrington got up and remarked that she ought to be in jail. Then he said goodnight.

But Dorothy did not have a good night. A few hours later her mother telephoned Steve to come over at once; and he found her nearly out of her mind. This cousin of ours, who had once been such a personal lovable figure, now lay on her bed and raved against life. What was the use of living in such a perfectly rotten world? Let them shoot her and be done with it! If they put her in jail, she would go insane!

"Don't let them! Oh, Steve, I'd go mad! It's not death I'm afraid of—I want to die! But to lose my mind! Oh Steve—Steve!"

He held her steadily for a while, until the paroxysm passed.

"Now I'm going to help you," he said, "and we're going to stick together as close as we were in Germany. But I won't be able to help you much unless you do just as I say. You're frightened and you have a right to be; you're in a very dangerous state. But most of the trouble comes from inside. Nobody is going to put you in jail. You're either going to stay right here or else come over to Lucy and me. In a way, remember, we're in the same boat. I'm often called a pro-German because of the work we did over there. But it seems so very small, such talk, compared to the big things happening now. In your case, I'll admit it has been worse—the things they've said have been more raw. But they're only stings on the surface. The real trouble is beneath. And we've got to get to that—we've got to have it out, my dear. You're too big a person to have come to this condition through such little stings. What are they compared to the things we saw?"

Talking quietly by her side, he forced her mind back through the horrors day and night in that old German theatre, until they came to her husband's death and his vision, at the end, of the only thing that could save the world—a determined coming together of all liberal-minded men and women in every land, to build a new order out of the old.

"That is the one big hope," he said. "That is what our kind of people in every land are fighting for."

"But you'll be beaten!" she broke in. "This hating—it has gone too far! Can't you remember how they were in Berlin—how they hated England? And in that Prussian village—at his funeral!" She stopped sharply and seemed to shake from head to foot.

"Yes," he said steadily, gripping her hand. "That funeral was the deepest root of all this trouble you're having now. We've got to the bottom at last, my dear."

"But it's spreading—I tell you it's spreading!" she cried. "I've seen it rise even over here, where we had least reason or excuse—no millions killed or wounded! We might have been the very ones to end it—make the hope come true! Instead we are the very worst of all the haters in the war!"

She was back again at her starting point. In vain he argued with her, and he realized that she was in for a pretty serious time. Her mother, he knew, could help very little. After the illness she had been through, Aunt Amelia was in no condition to act as a nurse for Dorothy; and besides, she only excited the girl. So Steve took her over to his place and kept her in bed for several weeks. At times he came and talked with her or sat quietly by her side. Lucy slept in the room at night. They were afraid to leave her alone.

But there was in the atmosphere of this place the same feeling that existed in thousands of hospitals all over Europe in those days. The hatred and hysteria, which to Dorothy's half crazed mind had loomed like a black specter darkening the entire earth, was here like a nightmare left behind. For these recovering men and boys were turning their thoughts away from the war and were eager to get back to their homes. In the room next to Dorothy's, there were two young officers who talked at intervals all day long, and Dorothy could hear them. They swapped stories of trench-life and discussed by the hour the merits of various guns and generals. They had been keenly interested in this job of killing Germans; but it had been an ugly job. They spoke with contempt of those people at home who shouted about the glory of war. They were devilish glad it was near an end. One was from Minnesota and the other from Illinois; one had worked in a wood pulp mill, the other on his uncle's big farm. And they talked about farming and forestry, and girls they knew, and hoped to God they would get home for Thanksgiving dinner. Letters from home were read and discussed; and gifts arrived—among them a ukelele. The chap who knew how to play the thing gave lessons to the other, and showed how much handier it was than a banjo or guitar.

Listening in spite of herself to such talk as this day after day, my cousin's mind began to relax; her sense of proportions began to change. Then came the news of Tommy and me—and something broke in Dorothy. For the first time in months she had a good cry—she and Lucy together, in each other's arms. And only a few days after this she felt abruptly the grip and urge of a sudden sharp emergency. For the "flu," which in this country was to cause ten times the death and desolation brought by the war, had already spread throughout the land. Over-worked as he already was, Steve had been drawn into the fight. Worn out at last from the double strain, he himself contracted it and reached home dangerously ill. Pneumonia developed, and on the fourth day he nearly died. Meanwhile it had broken out among the patients. There were some thirty cases, and things looked desperate for a time. With Steve's assistant doctor, Lucy bravely held the fort. She worked and never seemed to tire, and she told me that everyone else who was not sick was doing the same.

"Everyone helped each other, those days. It was very wonderful," Lucy said.

But to return to Dorothy. In those desperate days and nights, Lucy had forgotten her—until one evening she appeared and said,

"I'm well now, Lucy—and I want to help you."

Soon she was busy as the rest.

Steve recovered rapidly. As he told me later on, recovery was in the air. The epidemic was dying down; and as for the war, the end of it was now only a matter of days. Revolution in Germany at last! If it proved to be real and they set up a decent free republic, and we stood by our big ideals and could bring the Allies to do the same, there would be such a chance as never before in all the ages to build up such a new world order as would make the terrible sacrifice worth while. Too good to be true? But it did seem true in those wonderful days! Every hour the news poured in. Then one night came a cable from Tommy:

"Home in two weeks. Doing fine."

Lucy ran with the message into Steve's room.

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2.

Tommy got home just in time for Thanksgiving, and I came a week or so after that.

My blindness made a difference, but not so much as one might think. For I had acquired super-ears. I did not see the harbor, but I could hear it from down the Bay. As we came up through the Narrows, I heard the distant bursts of cheers; and suddenly I had it all—the crowded basin and its shores, the hills of Staten Island, the Liberty statue far ahead and the tall buildings of Manhattan. Our big ship covered with little brown men moved slowly up the River now. Another burst of cheers from a ferry. I took off my cap and yelled with our boys. It was good to be home!

At last we drew in to the dock. And though I did not see Steve and Dad, I heard their two voices clear and distinct rise out of the tumult of welcome below. A few minutes later on the pier I heard a splendid bit of news. I had dreaded another hospital, but Steve had been able to arrange to take me directly out to the country. We were to go that afternoon.

I did not see Fifth Avenue, but I heard it—vividly—the women's voices, chatter, laughter, gay quick cries, the roll of wheels, the grind of brakes, the soft thunder of the engines, the tread and shuffle and patter of thousands of booted and slippered feet. Coming from Russia, I had thought, "What a vulgar town it is." This time I did not think at all; I was simply glad to be home. It seemed to me as though for years I had been living tense and taut. Now, the relapse; the slump was on. I stopped for an hour or so to rest in Dad's big luxurious house, with Aunt Fanny to give me the petting I wanted.

"Oh Larry, dear, I'm so glad you are back!"

I wanted a lot of just such talk. And damn it, why not? I had earned it! I leaned far back in the cosy chair and felt the glow of the fire. Would I have a second cup of tea? I would, and a little more rum in it, please!

But it was better still, when we motored out to the country that day, to feel Lucy come into my arms, to grip Tommy's hand, and other hands—God only knows how many—that reached out from every side and welcomed me back to the joy of my home. Nobody spoke of my being blind—but later, as Dorothy said goodnight, her hand closed tight on mine and she whispered,

"Oh, Larry! Steve says you are going to see!"

A warm vital current of life went tingling all through me. Early to bed for a long long rest, with the crunch of feet on the snow outside, a voice now and then, the distant bark of a dog and a bell from the village. I pictured the hillside, white and still, the black outlines of the trees against a big round rising moon, and the twinkling lights in the valley below.

For several long days and nights I rested, drowsily content. I came suddenly out of that with a sharp surprising restlessness and vague anticipation, hunger for I knew not what. I wanted people, people I knew; I had long talks with Dorothy, and Lucy and Steve, and with my Aunt Amelia. Though she did not ask me to tell her of France, I could feel her eagerness to learn; and so one day I started in. In the picture that I painted, unconsciously I tried to bring out what I knew she wanted to hear. Nor did I find this difficult. For in spite of the blunders and needless petty tyrannies, there had been in truth a miracle in our armies over there. This miracle was the record of how the American doughboy, in heat and dust, in mud and rain, in bloody sweat, against shot and shell, had fought and endured for this great cause of which he said so little. And Aunt Amelia was satisfied.

Learning that she was planning for such a Christmas at Seven Pines as we had not had in years, in my new restless eager mood I entered into the preparations with an exaggerated zeal; and as in those summers of long ago, Dorothy was my right hand and my fellow conspirator. I must have gifts for everyone, so she took me in to town to shop. Then back I came to Seven Pines to help with the holly and mistletoe. For all such work, as in days of old, I was a treasure, she declared. I was so very conveniently tall, I could hold a wreath so high! . . . It was an immense relief to me to find how Dorothy had changed. Not that she was converted from the views she held before. She was simply so glad the war was over, that Tommy and I were safely home, and that her old spectre, hatred, seemed to be losing its grip on the world. The people were rising in many lands; democracy was coming! Gladly I agreed with her, for I was in the mood those days to believe in anything good; and it was so good to be back again on the old warm intimate terms with this delightful cousin of mine. We laughed as we worked, and she bossed me about. Once when I stumbled she caught my hand, and after a tense little silence she said very quietly,

"I'll be so glad when you can see. Now let's put some green up over that door."

As the members of the family began to arrive on Christmas Eve, I started a family confab over the effects of the war in this and other countries. Eagerly Aunt Amelia joined in our discussion. And she was so hungry for assurance of wide happy vistas opening into the future, that the others did their best to give her what she wanted. But the gap was so obvious and deep between the views of Aunt Fanny and Dad, and of Lucy, Steve, Dorothy and me, that by tacit consent the discussion was stopped—Dad remarking grimly,

"I'm sick and tired of world events. And if the world can't understand that it has intruded long enough outrageously into my private life—well, so much the worse for the world! It will simply have to be shown the door!"

Now came the Christmas tree, the gifts, the old familiar hubbub of cries; and after supper we all sang

Aunt Amelia's favorite songs. On the ride back with Steve and his family, something went wrong with his engine. We stopped for a moment. Sleepy remarks, then silence, and there came to my ears the crackle of the frosty ground, the tinkle of icicles on a fence and the bells of a distant sleigh. And a vivid picture came, and I turned my face up to the stars.

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3.

In the two weeks that I had been home, Tommy and I had come closer to each other than ever before; and this great husky lovable kid was a perfect Godsend in the dark. We developed various words and phrases that nobody understood but ourselves. How could they understand, those others? Poor devils with eyes, how could they know how it felt to have such ears as ours, such a sense of touch, "such smellers, by Golly!" Tommy proudly boasted of these great advantages; and he caused it to be understood that, though we would soon regain our sight, it was good fun nevertheless to act as though we should always be blind, and learn to live without our eyes. We soon managed to get about, not only indoors but all over the hillside. We made explorations, arm in arm, with Tommy's old dog hitched to a string. We learned to shave and tie our scarfs. Tommy tried the carpenter shop, and I my old typewriter; and to my delight I discovered that I could manage fairly well. Closer and closer we drew together into a world that was all our own.

But a little after Christmas I felt a change in Tommy. The easy intimate comradeship was gone. In his voice I could feel an awkwardness, an anxious vigilant reserve and preoccupation. For the bandage was now off his eyes; and as the old familiar world, blurred and queer in those first days, began to appear before him, mingled with his joy and relief was a sharp regret and embarrassment. He was figuring desperately on how he was to break the news. Meanwhile, quite unconsciously, he did it through his grip on my arm. For by degrees I could feel that grip carefully steering me along. Then one day with a quick jerk, Tommy said, "Look out, old man!" And a moment later my foot struck a stone. In the little talk that followed, I tried to tell him how glad I was; but men are selfish animals, and it was a damnable time for me as I felt that kid slip out of our darkness. Later he left to go to school, and one by one the other war patients said goodbye and went away. I could feel the world pick up, move on. I had been scrapped and thrown aside.

Should I ever see again—or was the hope which Steve held out merely a tonic to keep me up until I could be told the truth? As the weeks wore into months, there came to me a bitterness I do not like to think of now. Millions of people, I suppose, were feeling that after-the-war slump. In my case it was pretty desperate—ugly, sharp and morbid.

I remember the parade of our Division in New York. At first I thought I would not go, but at the last I changed my mind, for I craved excitement. On the train I pictured how it would be. But as we came up the Avenue, I heard very little excitement. Looking back upon it now, I cannot blame those stolid crowds. The thing had not been dramatized. In the next parade they staged it right. With captured guns, with tanks and floats, machine guns rattling, rockets shooting and gas clouds of vivid hues, they made a roaring flashing pageant—and the New York crowds went wild. But in our case there was no show, nothing but monotonous files of men and boys who had fought in France. And though all along the line were scattered bursts of cheering from groups of friends and relatives, the big crowd soon grew dull and cold. They were sick and tired of world events. Back to business as usual, back to their old normal lives. But with me in an ambulance sat five youngsters who were blind, who saw no normal lives ahead, not even the certainty of a job. And as like me they listened to that apathy along the lines, the eager gay excitement with which they had begun the day died out of their voices. There were frequent halts, and at such times we had ears so devilish acute that in those apathetic crowds we could hear all kinds of side remarks. Two men with harsh incisive voices were discussing a business deal; a couple of shop-girls were absorbed in talk of some corsets they meant to buy. There were little critical remarks.

"How much more of it is there?" somebody asked. And we heard a man say to his wife,

"It's one forty-five. How about dinner?"

Then the blind boy next to me muttered,

"Go on back to your dinners, God damn you!"

And another disappointed kid said simply.

"Gee, but it's hell to be home."

Farther up the Avenue there was more cheering to be heard, and the boys brightened up a bit. But I was deeply bitter still. The hardships, all the pluck and nerve, the patient grim endurance, to which I had been a witness in France, rose up in my memory here; I remembered how on stifling roads or on beds of long, long agony I had heard the Buddies say, "Just you wait till we get home! There'll be something coming to us for all this!" And I cursed these people who were bored, who had lost so little in the war and were now going on so comfortably with their fat dull regular lives. I was bitter against profiteers, and against the new era of glitter and flash I could feel coming back on the Avenue.

It was only a little after this that I listened to the wedding of my young half-sister, Louise. I had not expected to go at first, but Lucy inveigled me into it, and I motored in with Steve and herself. On the ride our minds went back to the night when Steve had brought Louise into the world. And the irony of that occasion was enlarged by the present event. The world made safe for democracy. Oh, ye ancient gods and devils, what a smile for you this day! In the church my ears gave me the scene, and I thought, "There's a billion dollars here." Then that billion dollars—in furs, gowns, jewels, in uniforms, in boots and spurs, with decorations, titles imported from abroad—poured into Aunt Fanny's home; and they had a wedding breakfast that would have made a starving Europe smack its lips and strain its eyes with a rather crazed intensity, as it looked upon this land of the free.

I did not need to mix in the crowd; from my father's den I could hear it all. And as the vibrant hubbub of voices, laughter, sudden cries, the Jazz music and the scent of many roses and perfumes came drifting in, it seemed to me as though I had the picture, not only of these wedding guests but of the very souls of them. Cold, hard, cynical? Not at all. Warm, exultant, victory blind, cocksure of their fine patriotism, relieved that certain foolish but rather dangerous messages that had come out of the White House of late, concerning the New Freedom and the Brotherhood of Mankind, were already melting into thin air. The war was over and we were back—back, thank God, in the same old pleasant gentleman's world, which was safe for a billion dollars still!

There was a glow and a kick to it all, like the glass of champagne I took that day. Some of the young people were dancing now, and I wished I could do a bit of that. But I was booked for another role. From time to time, Aunt Fanny or Dad would bring back into the den somebody who wanted to grip my hand. I was a hero. I was one of the sons and brothers and husbands who by getting killed or crippled had justified our right to all this!

Young Carrington was another. He, too, had stopped a bullet in France. Again and again there came to my ears the gay tone of his voice as he hurried about. He was running this show. Deeply fond of Louise and his mother, he was resolved in his practical soul that this wedding should be as happy a time as he could make it. When at last, with a sudden bursting tumult of voices and laughter in the hall, the bride and groom departed, and the guests soon went away, young Carrington came back to smoke in the den with Dad and Steve and me. And as we talked of the wedding and of his mother and sister, I felt that this lad would shoot to kill, to protect them in their property.

He spoke of the raids against the Reds, in New York and other cities. These were only a starter, he said. He himself was working hard at the job of re-adapting our father's mills to the needs of peace; but there was war in Carrington's tone as he grimly joked at Dad's policy of conciliating the men. Fight every strike, root out every Red, hit every union between the eyes! That was Carrington's advice. And the great mass of the workmen could soon be brought into line, he declared. Nothing the matter with the men, if agitators would leave 'em alone. Hadn't he seen in the army how they responded to discipline? And it could be the same in peace. He loved machines and the forging of steel, and in the very soul of him he was convinced that all men were the same. I could almost see him as he talked—small, straight, hard, clean-cut and keen, pleasant, loyal to his friends, shrewd, practical and obstinate—a strong recruit to the Tories here. "For my country and my family, and our right to what is ours." With this slogan he was starting in. How far would he go? It was hard to tell. But that afternoon it seemed to me as though there were thousands like him springing up all over the land.

From time to time my father threw in a brief comment, and by the sound of his voice I could tell he was feeling blue and lonely. It was not only that his daughter was gone; it was the realization that he himself had felt and looked and acted old all through the wedding. Young Carrington's talk disturbed him, too. Anxiously he looked ahead and saw trouble brewing on every side. His old world had not come back. Even in his own mills he could sense something new. In spite of his son, he had settled one strike, but he expected others. For there was something new in the air, he said, in a puzzled tone. Disturbing tips had come to him concerning the radical movements sweeping over Europe.

"How the devil can we stave 'em off, with the world's exchange in such a state? No sound credit anywhere, no sense of anything under your feet. Problems cropping up on all sides—and people not facing 'em, going it blind! The fact of the matter is," he said, "that we're like men standing on a bridge that we are building as we go. Our backs are to the sunny side, and there's nothing but thick fog ahead."

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord.

Poor old Aunt Amelia.

CHAPTER XX

1.

Blind for life! Or would I see? Back in the country with Lucy and Steve, I grew terribly depressed. In vain they tried to give me hope that my sight would be restored. I thought that I knew better. The old pain above my eyes would tackle me viciously again, and down I would plunge into the dark.

Gloomy writing this, you say? Then let me remind you that I write not of myself alone but of a million others in this country and abroad—wrecks of the war who cannot die. And if you were in favor of the war, if you pledged yourself to those great ideals, then it will not do you harm to think of these men who are paying the price. I was more lucky—I'm happier now; but many of them are still in that black slough of despond where they have been left—forgotten!

In my bitter mood those days the thought of these men and the millions dead became an obsession; and in their name I demanded of the living what they were doing to make it worth while. The great mass of the people here had sunk back into their little lives; while over there where we had fought, Civilization was breaking down, amid forces so overpowering that what each one of us pigmies did seemed no longer of any account. What had I left to live for? At times I tried to hide my gloom from the rest of the family, and for the moment I would respond to their obvious efforts to cheer me up. But again I would rebel against that. It seemed so false. They had their lives and were eager to live them. Then in God's name leave me alone! My melancholia increased, and with it their anxiety. A family conference was called, with the result that Aunt Amelia asked me over to Seven Pines.

So I came back to this old house, but at first it did little to help me. In the daytime it was not so bad. There were various small distractions and events to fill the time. Half consciously I grew interested in learning to find my way about; I had a sharp repugnance for being dependent on others. But I dreaded the long nights alone. From the days when I had worked on a paper, I had always been an owl. Though I had learned to sleep in the army, I returned to my old habits now; and the pain in my head came back again; and in the silence of the night, this house that I could no longer see, that had lost all outer aspect and become an inner presence, seemed like a pathetic old friend. In vain it tried to carry my mind back over the forty odd years of my life.

"It is not finished. As then, so now, you will go on," it seemed to say.

"No," I replied, "I'm done for. And so are you, Democracy. The world has cast us both aside."

I would lie awake in the darkness, my fancy making leaps at times across the sea—to the grim old palace in Petrograd filled with surging crowds of men, Oberookoff and his mother in the lonely village, and the old Prince with his family marooned upon their large estate. In the prodigious chaos there how many were still left alive? I remembered others I had known, in Germany, France and England, the men and boys who had paid the price. And in my bitter darkness half mad I had long talks with them. Often they came to me in my dreams—both the living and the dead—Max Sonfeldt with his tragic eyes, and the Galician peasant who had begged us for his boots; and the young dramatic critic came, the chap I had met that night on the train, and with him the little journalist with whom we had dined in the London café—he had been killed in Flanders. And some of them talked intensely, but others said to me nothing at all—silent enigmas in the vast puzzle—"What was it for? What will it bring?" Figures from a host of millions all forever silent now. But what eyes they had! They seemed to say,

"What a pity you are blind, all you who are living—blind to the forces that struck us down, blind to what lies just ahead."

Why live on in such a world? In my morbid gloom I asked why not join the Silent Army?

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2.

Sometimes in a dressing-gown I would come softly down the stairs and settle deep into a chair before the fire. One night growing chilly I groped for a log and put it on the embers. A moment later, with a thrill, I felt that the sleeve of my gown had caught fire. I hesitated—then put it out. But the odor of the burning wool must have reached a room above, for presently I heard Dorothy coming. How did I know it was Dorothy? Through these super-ears of mine. I heard her come quickly as though in alarm, then stop and look over the banister.

"Isn't something burning, Larry?"

"No—it's all right now," I said.

"What is it?" She came to my chair, and I felt her hand on my burnt sleeve. "Now she's worrying," I thought. Poor girl, it wasn't easy to have a chap like me in the house.

"Pretty hard, isn't it, dear," she said. "I used to sit in this chair myself." I turned my head quickly, then felt her hand. "I used to come down here often at night. . . . It seems so far behind me now. Thank God the war is over."

"It isn't" I said, "not the worst of it."

"Yes—things still look black—I know. But it hasn't always been like this—and I don't believe it will be—long." Her hand slowly tightened on my own—and suddenly, as though she had spoken, two pictures flashed out of the past. One was of that labor pageant where she had sat by my side; the other was of that multitude of men and women and children out at Ellis Island with a passion of hope in their eyes. Just so her hand had tightened then.

"It's pretty black," I heard her say, "until you try to get out of the present—look 'way back—and then ahead. I feel so sure that in a few years it will grow better," she went on. "I don't believe people in any country will ever want any war again—at least not for so long a time that meanwhile there will be a chance for sanity to come to us all." I was silent. "You don't think so?"

"I'm afraid you're not facing this," I said.

"Perhaps I'm not. But I think I've learned something, Larry. Until I worked out of my trouble I was a pretty poor judge of the world—and I think it will be the same with you. You can't feel it now—but remember that I know you so well. I've been thinking a good deal lately, dear. You're so much stronger than you know—and I'm sure you will come through all this." Again there was silence, and she said, "It's Mother that I'm anxious for."

"How do you mean?"

"She's almost dying, Larry. Already she has to keep to her room—and you had barely noticed that. In another year she may be gone. And what I want to ask is this. I want you to make a better record than I did a year ago. So far you've been just like me—wrapped up in your own troubles. Oh I know how hard it is—I know, I know! But how I wish I could have spared Mother the perfect hell I made her go through—just by not trying, not realizing! For think what it means: All her life Mother has been—what you know. Then the war came—a frightful shock—but she met that by building up a great house of new ideals to live in, a house that took in the whole world. It was pretty plucky at seventy, Larry. But now that house is falling down—and she won't have time to build another—nor the strength. She's trying to—I shouldn't wonder if even tonight she were lying awake upstairs—trying so hard to work it out. But she can't do it without our help—and that's why I'm asking you to make a better record than I did. That's why I'm not facing this, as you say. You may be right and you may be wrong—there'll be time enough to find out later on. But there isn't much time for Mother. If she's to see any victory she'll have to see it very soon—and she'll have to see it in her children. She's like that—she has always been. She has got to see our lives working out to some kind of hope and happiness."

She waited.

"I'll do my best," I said.

But I was not thinking of my aunt. I was thinking of Dorothy. For in a flash it came over me that she spoke only half the truth; that she, too, was thinking not of her mother but of me; that as I slipped down into the dark she was trying to hold me back—with this slowly tightening hand of hers and this appeal to my love for my aunt; and with that queer pity women feel she was even coming to care for me! And I wanted her—so sharply and so desperately then, that for a few moments I sat very still.

"I'll do my best," I repeated. "Won't you please—please leave me now?"

After she had gone, my thinking went on rapidly.

"She's ready to do it again," I thought. "But she mustn't! To spend the rest of her life with a shattered wreck like me—morbid, blind in body and soul? No!" I decided savagely. But I thought of the forces here drawing us together. Her mother dying? No, not yet —but she had not very long to live. And then what? Dorothy and I, left in this house where we had been reared. A vista opened suddenly. I was afraid and turned away. Desperately I began to think what I could do—where I could go. But it is not easy for one who is blind. I sent for Steve and asked him to help me.

"No, you must stay here," he said. "It's your only chance to come out of this. I'm seeing hundreds of men like you—in hospitals—the blind, the insane—it's like a black inferno there. And even with me you only grew worse. No, your only chance is here—here in this house that holds so much of your life beside the present."

"It holds too much!" I answered. I gave him some hint of the night before.

"You're right," he said, when I had finished, "and I'll help you get away—just as soon as I know you're a hopeless case. But you're not so now, you're going to fight. There's a good chance still and you're going to take it." I made no reply. Then I heard him say, "Your eyes are already as well as mine." I caught his hand.

"What do you mean? Good God, Steve——"

His voice went on in a curious tone of concentration, tense and low,

"I mean the trouble is in the nerves—as I've told you before—and they may be cured. I don't say it is likely, but I say there is a chance—and this gloom of yours is spoiling it. For the more we grope along in our science, the more mysteries we find in the ties between a man's mind and his body. We see miracles performed. . . . But if there's one here it will have to be soon. I'm not lying to you, Larry——" His voice, still low, grew sharp and clear. "You haven't much time. In a few months it will be too late. Even now I say there's just a chance! But I'm asking you to go over the top! You will never get back your sight without your inner vision, too—your hope in life! So let's look at this world again, you and I, and see if it is dark as it seems!"

"You mean that I'm to to learn to say, 'God's in his heaven—all's well with the world'?" I demanded harshly. I was quivering. In my shaken state, with shattered nerves, I could not keep down the rising excitement. I clinched my hands! They were icy!

"Steady, now—I know it's hard. But listen—come along with me." His steady hand and arm went around me. "See it real. I don't want you to lie to yourself—I'm asking you to fight for the truth. Have you got it now? Are you sure you have? Or is this black view of yours all colored by what you've been through? Remember I was a surgeon once——"

Steve's right hand closed on mine. With a shock that went tingling through me, I felt the strength of that crippled hand! Back went my thoughts in one great leap to the time of his agony long ago.

"And I came through," I heard him say. "Will you fight this, Larry?"

"Yes," I said.

. . . .

3.

Our talk went on half through the night. He lifted me and forced me on; he took my mind careering with his out over the earth to the widely scattered multitude of lonely figures like ourselves—in cities, towns and villages and out under the silent stars—the watchers among the sleepers—who, while most of the people went on blindly as before, alone or in pairs or little groups were groping and searching for a way out of the present darkness. And though they were so scattered now, the future lay in their hands, he said. Slowly at first, then rapidly, they would increase in every land.

"And then they will combine. They must. For the war at least has taught one thing—the immense potentialities in cooperation!" he said. "I look back into the ages and I see the whole world game as a war between light and darkness, life and death. And nothing else can really count. For this instinct in all people—to live and see and understand—resistless as the ocean tide—in spite of all reactions, moves inexorably on—to cooperation within each land and cooperation between them all, in the struggle out of darkness, the war against disease and death!"

He reminded me of the miracles of vitality we had seen in the war, the startling revelations of reserve forces hidden in men and brought forth by the mighty stimulus of this cooperation, this working and enduring all together as parts of a whole. This whole had been the nation. Soon it would become the world—an entity so much more complex and bristling with uncertainties, but boundless possibilities, too! Harshly I reminded him that cooperation could work both ways—that if a few liberal-minded men were getting together in every land, so were the extremists combining upon either side, to drive us back into despotism or on into a chaotic mob rule. Let them, Steve retorted. They would never be satisfied until they had fought it out. And the triumph of either extreme would be brief. If the Reds won out, they would be forced by life itself to moderate. Already in Russia they were doing that. And if the reactionaries won, their triumph would be briefer still. For humanity wanted a sane middle course. Soon the cry would go up in the world for the real builders, healers; and one by one the great engineers would appear to lead us all in the gigantic era of reconstruction and progress ahead. Changes? Yes, prodigious changes! Thank God for this restlessness!

And as with nations, so with men. Through all his talk in that long night I could feel Steve approach my case. He spoke of the patients in his care, widely different kinds of men who were being built up after the storm. So many of them were being forced to take stock of their lives and make fresh starts. But without such jolts and changes, how blind and arrogant was success. Again he spoke of his own life. "What a great god I thought myself, till suddenly I was brought down." The socalled great ones we had known, what uninspiring chaps they were compared to those still struggling up. In restlessness, in hunger, in groping and searching lay the hope, and the only hope, of any real growth. He turned abruptly to my work.

"How about those plays you wrote?"

"Half the work was done in rehearsal," I said.

"You mean that you can't handle 'em now. But think a minute. Are you sure that what you wrote was so worth while? I don't know much about your work, but you've told me enough to make me sure that the Broadway theatre is no place for a man who wants to write God's honest truth. And that's what you want to do now, old boy. It's the biggest thing in you, this passion to write. It's your chance, the only chance you've got—but it's big—a chance for a big honest book! Not about the war—don't tackle that yet. Go way back into your life—from there work slowly through the years—and when you reach the present you may not find it quite so dark." He was silent for a moment. "You may even find you can see," he said.

Once more those words went through me like a sudden flare of light. Although at first I dismissed the idea, he came back to it again and again. At last he got me to promise to try; and in the days that followed, with a deepening glow of surprise I found that under all my gloom the old will to write was in me still. And this sharp hungry instinct, this weird mysterious craving to put one's self on paper, soon had such a powerful hold that I began to get my grip on the hope which Steve had given.

I let Dorothy help me now. I had avoided her before, and I meant to still—but in spite of myself the talks we had grew longer. We kept them to this book of mine. As though we were both a little afraid of the present and the future, we travelled far back into the years, evoking the scenes and the faces. The spring had come; we sat under the trees—or again, Dorothy would propose, "Let's go up to Mother's room"—and there the talk would go on, with my aunt. And Steve still came to me often at night. For they seemed afraid to leave me alone.

Slowly the numberless scattered ideas came together and took form, in a long chain of memories leading me back—an escape from the present into the past, from an ominous tense oppressive country into a far distant land.

. . . .

4.

So this narrative was begun. As I sat here late in the evening alone, the pictures from that distant land became more vivid than ever before. It was as though from a dark passage I looked into a lighted room. And by degrees I began to feel that it was not now but in the past that I had been blind. My life had been hasty, crowded, assaulted upon every side by a storm of impressions, sights and sounds, the chatter of people as blind as I. But now the million and one details of life upon the city streets—the masses of faces sweeping by, the chatter, surge and roar and quiver, that I had felt every day—was gone. In this silent room at night, forced up against realities—asking, "What was it all about?"

What have I been up to all my life? To what were we rushing so?"—I looked back into the turgid years. Steadily and calmly, with clear vision? No, indeed. I was still only groping. Again and again I had to stop, destroy what I had written and make a fresh start. For all those haunting monitors, gathered close around me still, kept sternly saying, "Brother—the truth!" We were so close together here that by degrees I found myself writing my whole book for them. And unconsciously at first, in the relief of my escape, I glorified my country's past as compared to these fat puffy days. I pictured the America that had gone to war with no selfish aim; the powerful nation sanely free and showing a bewildered world a safe middle ground between either extreme of anarchy on the one hand, autocracy on the other; a mixing bowl for all the races, an asylum for the oppressed. But as I continued along these lines, I could feel my smiling monitors say:

"The world is too weary and battered and wise, too up against realities, to believe in such radiant romance now. Brother—the truth!"

And I tried for that. I began my book again. Grimly I stuck to what I myself had seen and heard in this country, ever since those eager days when I was a small boy at Seven Pines. One by one I collected the memories of my own little life and what it had touched upon as it wound this way and that. "For this is all that I really know." And many scenes and incidents came in to mar my picture of the Great Democracy. Some were just petty and commonplace—things that the people I had known had said or done or schemed to do; but other scenes were pretty black—Steve's hospital, our year in the slums, cops, ward heelers, crooks and bums and prostitutes, arrogant little Reds and equally arrogant fatheads uptown; and towering over all of these, the big stout man with yellow eyes who had produced those plays of mine and had colored them up to tickle the palate of the tired business man. Like ghosts they rose between me and the effort to glorify my land.

Moreover, my memories of the past were colored by the present. It was hard to boast of our people now. Again in waves my bitterness would come back and engulf me still. For long periods I stopped writing and tried to wrestle out the truth. We who had proclaimed to the stars a mighty generous league of nations, a new world order of mutual aid, what in the name of the lads who had died were we doing to fulfill our promise? We had left the powers at Versailles, the good old diplomatic rats, to gnaw to shreds the big ideals that had swept our country into the war; and while our politicians were squabbling over what was left, each little American citizen was back in his Yankee rut. "How are you helping our friends overseas!" my monitors seemed to demand. To feed and clothe the starving shivering millions of victims "over there," were we stinting ourselves? Not at all! Such an orgy of spending had set in as was never seen in this land before. And when the masses went on strike in order to double their wages and join in the merry spending game, the patriots who were still on top, faced by this seething restlessness, replied by shrieking "Bolsheviks!" and spreading hysteria over the land. For the moment my country had gone blind. How could such pigmies build a new world? Where was the hope in a league of nations, if when the plans had been written on paper only such little little men in the world to work them out? What possibility was left of any wide generous vision?

Nor did I feel like a god looking down upon all this. In my desperate searching I came to feel a part of it. I cried to myself, "Like my age I am blind! The war like a great dazzling flame has seared my eyes and left me in darkness! Where shall I go? Where is light by which to see the road?"

But as I slowly groped my way through the memories of my life, at last the years began to reply. For had not humanity from the start been made up of just such pigmies? And yet when you looked at them not alone but as dark little silhouettes against the glowing backgrounds of their achievements on the earth, what stupendous changes these blind little men and women had wrought, even in my lifetime—in the twinkling of an age! I could look back into the days when the world was not bound so distractingly close by the steamship and the railroad, the automobile, the aeroplane, the telephone, cable and wireless, the newspaper, the magazine, the book, the film, the swiftly growing cities and towns. Even I could remember a time when most of these phenomena would have been thought the wildest dreams. Yet they had come. And they were the Changers, they were the Blind Revolutionists, transforming the world for better or worse—themselves mere products of the minds of pigmy men and women. So men had loosed the forces which reacting on themselves had utterly transformed their lives and were still rushing us on at a pace that made the whole fabric of civilization quiver and shake as at the impact of a storm.

Blind—blind! Yet through it all, it seemed to me now, as I slowly regained my vision, that ever since my boyhood these chaotic tides of change had moved in one direction. I thought of Ellis Island and the grand migrations of people, surging on from East to West. Out onto the prairies the homeseekers poured, and up into the mountains, swiftly peopling the land my Aunt Amelia loved so well, the pioneer West with its hard rough life, its crude democracy, hopes and dreams and crimes and schemes and lusts of eager hungry youth.

But as the open country filled, there came a rush back to the towns, the sons and daughters of our farms joining the incoming tides from abroad to crowd our cities and mining towns and mill and factory centers with an ominous discontent. I thought of the packed roaring streets of New York—dirty stinking streets at night down in the restless teeming slums; Fifth Avenue at five o'colck, one long gorgeous gleam of cash; and Broadway at the theatre hour, opening nights of plays of mine. I thought of Dad's luxurious home, and of that big New Jersey strike. What a city, what a country—crowding, crowding, crowding up, dividing into rich and poor, chaotic, every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost!

Then came the Great Interruption. For with a blinding flash of guns the pigmy millions overseas rushed together; and jerked from its old isolation my country was relentlessly drawn into the bloody family. War to the death! And in this war the old class bitterness drowned out, in every land all classes fused together in a rigid whole. Discipline. Authority. I recalled the German army. Husky boys with obedient eyes crowding into trains and lorries, tramping along muddy roads. Night in the trenches—colored lights, the long weird whines and sudden screams and crashing din of shells above—and around me those obedient eyes. Cold ghastly little villages in Belgium and in Northern France, in Poland and Galicia; throngs of refugees on roads, starving, sick, the victims of war. On they went in the mud and the dark—the powers above them pressing them down. My mind went back to teeming cities, out to lonely hamlets and to ships upon the sea. Ironclad discipline everywhere.

And then the tides beneath swept on. For what the war had interrupted, it accelerated now. If for a little moment in time it had increased authority, it had strained the patient endurance of the peoples to the breaking point; it had brought them together as never before. And so came Russian memories where these people from below, from slums and starving villages, surged along the city streets in immense processions or poured into old palaces to organize crude parliaments, with shouted dreams of liberty, equality, fraternity. A vast confusion starting there—the Spirit of the Common Herd stalking blindly out to meet the Spirit of Violence and War. And that fierce restlessness swept down all over Europe and over the seas—until in every land it seemed that men by countless millions were being hurled together for some titanic struggle now!

Such were the changes I had seen!

. . . .

5.

Then I tried to look ahead.

I thought of those Gentlemen Hounders, so conspicuous in these days, so self-righteously resolved to clamp down the national lid and see that this damned process of change is put a stop to once and for all. And I wondered if, while still there was time, these men would open their eyes and look back into the grim ironic past. Let no more radical pioneers be allowed to disturb this peaceful land? They speak as men spoke long ago of Wendell Phillips and his kind. Mob them, lynch them, throw them out! No more of this labor discontent! And as for a league of nations, this talk of a world brotherhood, let that be deported, too. Let every new thought be kept out of our country, that the old may prosper here. It has been tried, gentlemen, it has been tried. In Ancient Rome, in Spain, in France, in Germany and Russia, men of your kind have again and again clamped down the lid. It will never do. Deport our Bolsheviki? As well deport thermometers. Throw them out of the sick rooms! Damn the things, they scare us so! Go at the patient with whips instead, in the good old medieval style, and beat the devils out of him! But what a dangerous policy. If the patient were normal, gentlemen, the thermometer would not scare you so. But there is a fever here, made up of wrongs both old and new, not only in the slums of our cities and our ugly factory towns but even out on the farms as well—a deep burning discontent. You can't deport it, gentlemen, nor can you by injunctions force it to dig coal out of the ground. That way leads to civil war.

Then I thought of the Bolsheviki, and I wondered what would become of their dreams. I did not believe they would come true. For though in every country the signs already begin to appear of such forces as may soon result in astounding transformations, I do not think they can be controlled by any one group or any one creed so narrow as to say to all others,

"You are all blind. We alone have eyes. We will be your eyes and your brains and hearts in this crisis of mankind." For people are not made like that. If our Gentlemen Hounders have their way, then indeed it may come to a crash. But it seems to me that these brief years of blind reaction will soon pass, and that the Bolsheviki will find themselves confronted then by the numberless hosts of the Great Slow Revolution here. On every hand there will arise millions of men and women, in labor unions, farmers' leagues and radical parties of various brands. These people will say to the Bolshevik,

"Well, brother, if you think you've got the Great Idea, go ahead and hire a hall."

And then these men will go busily on with their own revolutions. The Bolshevik will find himself competing with many strenuous groups, each one of whom will shamelessly steal a little of his thunder. For the Great Slow Revolution, which began before we were born and will continue doubtless long after we are dead, will be driven on its course by all kinds and conditions of men, and its disordered army will offer no united front. No solid proletariat, but a mighty hodge-podge composed of clashing masses, each with a different outlook, different interests and aims. Not united but in factions, in confusion and in bitter sweat, with grim and vexing problems crowding in upon all sides, they will make their try for democracy.

And only in part will they succeed; the mills will still grind slowly on. So it has been through the ages. What numberless millions have worked and planned completely to cure all the ills of mankind, to make life easier, richer, to glorify it in our eyes. All a failure? No, indeed. But how different was the reality from what they had seen in their dreams. So it has been and so it will be. It is only through the slow unconscious widening of this Vast Entente—as angry nations, classes, creeds are inexorably bound closer together through the changing years—that the great dim straining eyes of humanity will see the light. Single "great men" will arise, and sects and unions, parties, nations, to cry to us all, "We have the secret, we alone! The League! The Republic! The Soviet! We have what will save the world!" And each will be right, and each will be wrong. The deep life processes will go on—unfinished, still unfinished.

But what building there will be! Even now there comes to me a warm glorious certainty of the presence of new peoples springing up in every land. They were children when I saw them last, in Russia, France and Germany. Even in Russia I saw them play; even in Belgium I heard them laugh. They were irrepressible. Many of them have died, no doubt, and more are dying as I write—because we will not give them food. But in spite of the famine and despair, I feel just as sure as though I were with them that all through the bleak desolation of Europe multitudes of children are creeping, playing, laughing and gayly scampering about. By millions they are growing up, and like the children of our land they begin to look at the life ahead with fresh anticipations, vivid indignations, eager demands for a richer life and a world more free. And I put my hope in those lives ahead, and I see great vistas gleaming there. For these years of war and revolution, in spite of all their horrors, have given us a profoundly startling glimpse of what powers lie in men. What my Aunt Amelia believed so firmly to exist in the spirit of her nation, is true of all peoples on the earth. In us all is a reserve of idealism, courage, devotion and endurance, the presence of which we barely suspect, we who are so tragically blind. A Russian engineer once said,

"We are beggars sitting on bags of gold."

That is true of all humanity. And through the years that are coming the gold will appear to our opening eyes.

. . . .

6.

And what of my own little life? Have I recovered the use of my eyes? No, I shall be blind for life—but in spite of that I am happier now than I'd ever hoped to be again. For when my inner vision at last had been restored to me, one day Aunt Amelia sent for me to come up to her room. I found my cousin Dorothy there. And her mother said to us quietly,

"Larry dear, and Dorothy, I'm afraid that I am going to try to interfere in your lives. I've always tried not to do it before—but now I am getting near the end. You and Dorothy are my children. You've both been wounded in the war. I am wondering what you are going to do. I feel so sure that in this house you could be happy——" she broke off. "I'm asking you to promise me that you will take care of each other, my dears. I've been wondering how you can do it best. It would be unwise, I think, to try to go on living here unless you marry—but watching you both, I know you have come to care for each other, so deeply and so certainly, that this could not be a mistake. It was only your own trouble, Larry, that has been standing in the way—your feeling that you might be a burden. But though in your eyes you are still blind, in your spirit you are no longer so. And so there is nothing left in the way of the victory I've waited for."

We did not keep her waiting long.

And now as I sit here late at night alone in this familiar room, with my own little agony left behind and my new life opening ahead, it feels so quiet and serene, it is hard to believe the war was real. Yet once again these monitors, as though fearing that I might forget, seem whispering,

"Revolution. The world that you have seen with your eyes has amazingly changed since you were born. And even more astounding will be the turgid tidings of change that will come to your ears before you are dead."

THE END.

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